

Bangladesh Studies O Level (7094) Pilot Textbook

Topic 1 (a) Influence of major cultural figures

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Purpose of this chapter

This chapter covers Topic 1 of the five History & Culture Topics in the syllabus for the Cambridge GCE Ordinary Level Bangladesh Studies (syllabus 7094, Paper 1). It introduces candidates to:

- the influence of major cultural figures (**Topic 1a**)
- a general background of key developments in Bengali language, literature, art, architecture, folk culture and other cultural practices that shape the culture of Bangladesh (**Topic 1b**).

Teachers should note that the material provided here should form the basis of what is needed to answer the compulsory question in the examination. However, it is hoped that candidates will be able to draw on a wide variety of cultural experiences (by being exposed to poetry, song, dance, drama and local sites of historical interest) and on any other cultural figures to support their answers.

Pictures of many cultural figures can be found in: <http://banglapedia.search.com.bd>

Exam guidance

Teachers should note that candidates should be familiar with the influence of key figures on the culture of Bangladesh. They may provide information on any key figures (e.g. those suggested in Section 1b) to support their answers, but to restrict demands made on teachers and candidates, the University of Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) has decided that specific questions will **only** be asked on the following major figures:

- Alaol
- Lalon Shah
- Mir Mosharraf Hossain
- Rabindranath Tagore

- Begum Rokeya
- Kazi Nazrul Islam
- Jasimuddin
- Zainul Abedin.

Candidates are **not** expected to have studied the works of such exponents in detail, but should be able to comment on their contribution to developments in, for example, language, literature, drama, dance, music, painting or architecture.

Topic 1a: Influence of major cultural figures Alaol

Summary

A seventeenth-century poet who translated famous works in Bangla as well as writing his own songs and poetry. He has a prestigious library named after him.

An aristocratic background

Syed Alaol is one of the most famous Bengali poets of the Middle Ages. He was born around 1607 AD. There are disagreements over the place of his birth. Some scholars suggest that he was born in Chittagong while others say Faridpur. Alaol's father was a minister of Majlish Kutub, the ruler of Fatwabad (Fatehabad). Since he was born into an aristocratic family, Alaol received a good education in his early years. He learnt Bangla, Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian languages as well as the art of war and music.

Captured by pirates

On one occasion when Alaol was quite young, he was going to Chittagong with his father by boat. On the way, they were attacked by Portuguese pirates. The pirates killed his father and captured him. He was sent to Arakan in Myanmar.

Young Alaol found work as a bodyguard in Arakan. Later he worked as a teacher of music and dance in a well-to-do family. His poetic talent soon became well known and he was able to secure a place at the royal court of Arakan where he received royal patronage. Among his patrons were Syed Musa (Royal Minister), Solaiman (Chief Minister), Mohammad Khan (Minister of Army), Majlis Nabaraj (Minister of Taxation) and Magan Thakur, the Prime Minister and the adopted son of the king's sister.

Translations and original work

Alaol was a prolific writer. His most significant contributions to Bangla literature were made through translations of famous works in different languages into Bangla. His masterpiece, *Padmavati*, is a translation of a Hindi poem *Padmavat* by *Malik Mohammad Jayasi*. Most of his other translations were made from Persian and include *Saifulmuluk Badiuzzamal*, *Satimayana-Lor-Chandrani*, *Saptapaykar*, *Sikandarnama* and *Tohfa*. But Alaol also produced his own original works. These include a number of songs, mostly *vaishav*, and a book on the art of music, *Ragtalnama*.

Alaol is mostly hailed as one of the great poets who introduced romantic themes in Bangla poetry. Another characteristic of his works was that though they were mostly translated from other languages, his creative touch and unique style made the works essentially the property of the Bangla language. In addition to contributing to Bangla literature, Alaol also paid attention to questions of religion and morality, which were reflected in his *Tohfa*.

An award in his name

Alaol died around 1673 in Hat Hazari of Chittagong. A prestigious literary award in his name, *Alaol Sahitya Purashkar*, has been introduced to recognise important works in contemporary Bangla.

Comprehension Questions

1. When did Alaol live? What interesting things happened to him in his life?
2. In which areas of culture did he work?
3. Some people say Alaol is not very important because he just translated the works of other people into Bangla. This is not a correct view. Write down three reasons why he deserves to be called a major cultural figure in the history of Bangladesh.

Research Task

How many names can you find of contemporary writers who have received the *Alaol Sahitya Purashkar*?

Lalon Shah

Summary

A *baul guru* born in the eighteenth century who made a major impact through his songs about

equality and the meaning of human life. Unusually, his work was not written down, but was passed on by his followers.



Sketch of Lalon Shah
by Jotinthranath Tagor

Sketch of Lalon Shah by Jotinthranath Tagor from Banglapedia, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh

Bauls

Lalon Shah was a legendary *baul* of Bangladesh. *Bauls* are bands of people who compose and sing devotional folk songs in the villages. Though they are generally seen all over Bangladesh, they are mostly found in the districts of Kushtia, Meherpur, Chuadanga, Jhenidah, Faridpur, Jessore and Pabna. They do not follow any specific religious belief, neither do they believe in idol worship or differences in caste or creed. They are humanists who believe that all men and women are equal. They believe that nobody is a born *baul*, but one needs a *baul guru* to become a *baul*. Lalon Shah was one such *baul guru*.

Research Task and Activity

Find out more about the bauls of Bangladesh. Students can form groups and act out the induction of bauls by their spiritual leaders.

Abandoned and a new community

Very little is known about the family background of Lalon Shah. He is said to have been born in Harishpur village in Jhenidah district in 1772 AD. Some scholars say that he was born into a Hindu *Kayastha* family in Bhandara village in Kushtia district.

Legend has it that when he was young, he caught smallpox and was abandoned by his community. He was picked up in a critical condition by a Muslim *faqir* called Siraj Sain who nursed him back to health. When he went back home he was not welcome by his community.

So he returned to Siraj Sain and was inducted by him and came to be known as Lalon Shah Faqir. He married a Muslim woman and set up his *ashram* in the village of Chheuriya to compose and practise his songs. He had a considerable number of followers who included both Hindus and Muslims.

Universal spiritual songs

Lalon did not receive any formal education but he had extensive knowledge of Hindu and Muslim religious traditions. He composed about two thousands spiritual songs. The contents of his songs, though composed in simple words, speak of his deeper understanding of the meaning of human life and the philosophy of equality and non-communalism.

Lalon's songs were created in a rural context, but the message these songs conveyed was universal in nature. Therefore he gained popularity not only among ordinary countrymen, but also among the educated urban people. It is this universal message which made Lalon's song spread far and wide but also last through the centuries. This is why Lalon had influence not only on his great contemporary, the poet Rabindranath Tagore, but also on many creative minds of today's Bangladesh.

There are no written copies of Lalon's songs, but they were later transmitted orally by his disciples. Lalon died on 17 October 1890 at his *ashram* in Chheuriya.

Comprehension Questions

1. Lalon Shah was a baul guru. What does this mean?
2. Lalon Shah did not have a formal education, so why was he able to be so influential?
3. Describe at least two ways in which we can prove that Lalon was very influential.

Research Task

Find out some of the singers of Lalon's songs.

Discussion Question

Choose a partner. Here are two statements:

1. Alaol was much more important than Lalon Shah in our cultural heritage.

2. Lalon Shah was much more important than Alaol in our cultural heritage.
3. Pick one statement each and try to persuade your partner that your statement is the correct one.

Mir Mosharraf Hossain

Summary

A nineteenth-century novelist and playwright who wrote for over 50 years on history and Islamic beliefs. He used satire to criticise wrongs in society. He has a statue erected to him in Kolkata.

Picture: You can find a picture of Mir Musharraf Hossain in *Banglapedia* and *Prothom Alo* (Dhaka newspaper) in Eid Issue (November 2003) Magazine.

Zamindar family

Mir Mosharraf Hossain is a well-known novelist, playwright, essayist and journalist of the nineteenth century. He was born in a *zamindar* family in 1847 AD at Lahiripara of Kushtia. All about Mir Mosharraf Hossain's life can be found in his autobiography *Amar Jiboni* (My Life) and his wife's biography, *Bibi Kulsum*. Mir Mosharraf Hossain's early education began at home where he was taught Arabic and Persian. He learnt Bangla at a *pathshala* (village school). His formal education took place at Kushtia School and Krishnanagar Collegiate School. Later on he was admitted into Kolkata Kalighat School but could not complete his studies.

Religious themes

Hossain started writing when he was a boy of thirteen or fourteen and kept writing until his death. His contribution to Bangla literature is significant for a number of reasons. He mostly wrote on popular themes in the history and belief of Islam. His *Bishad Shindhu*, in which he narrates the tragic tale of the Battle of Karbala, is considered to be a masterpiece. His other works focusing on the life and history of Muslim people include *Moulud Sharif*, *Hajrat Omarer Dharmajiban Labh*, *Bibi Khodejar Bibaha* and *Madinar Gaurab*.

Peasant uprising

While Hossain focused on religious themes, he was equally interested in the everyday life of his fellow countrymen. For instance, his *Zamindar Darpan* was written against the background

of the peasant uprising against the landlords in Sirajganj 1872-73. He was also critical, in his book *Gokul Nirmul Ashonka*, of the excessive zeal in the killing of cows as he feared that this could have adverse effect on agriculture.

Satires

Another important contribution of Hossain was made in the successful use of satire in which he exposed the follies and vices prevalent in the contemporary society. His best known satires are *Udashin Pathiker Moner Kotha* and *Gazi Miar Bostani*.

Journalism

Hossain also worked for newspapers as a journalist. He was a reporter for *Sangbad Prabhakar*, a newspaper from Kolkata and *Grambarta Prakashika*, a paper from Kumarkhali. He later edited two newspapers called *Azizannehar* and *Hitakari*. He often wrote under the pseudonym, *Mosha*. He also wrote textbooks, such as *Musalmaner Bangla Shikha*.

Mir Mosharraf Hossain died on 19 December 1912. A few years after his death, a statue of him was erected at the Bangiyo Sahitya Parishad building in Kolkata.

Comprehension Questions

1. How can we tell that Mir Musharraf Hossain was very talented even at an early age?
2. Mir Musharraf Hossain produced many different kinds of works. List the different types of writing he did.
3. Do you agree that Mir Musharraf Hossain was a very conservative man who was reluctant to criticise others? Explain your answer.

Research Question

Mir Musharraf Hossain wrote 'satires'. Look up the meaning of this word and explain it. Can you find any other people in Bangladesh who have written 'satire'?

Expressing an opinion

You have to prepare a speech for an important meeting. You will be talking on 'Mir Musharraf Hossain was a great man'. The problem is that the other speakers have over-run their time. You have only 45 seconds for your speech! What will you say in that time?

Rabindranath Tagore

Summary

A nineteenth and twentieth-century writer of poetry, plays, novels and songs who won the Nobel Prize for Literature and was knighted by King George V. He wrote the national anthem of Bangladesh.

Picture: You can see a picture of young Tagore in *Banglapedia* and on <http://www.newagebd.com/aug1st03/060803/lit.html>

Rabindranath Tagore was the most versatile personality of Bangla literature. He was not only a great poet but also a prose writer, composer, painter, essayist, philosopher, educationist and social reformer. He wrote in Bengali as well as in English.

The Tagore household: a mixed cultural atmosphere

Rabindranath was born on 7 May 1861 at Jorashanko in Kolkata. He went to different prestigious schools including Oriental Seminary, Normal School and St Xavier's School. However, young Rabindranath did not like the monotonous rules and regulations of school life and he left school when he was about fourteen. He learnt his lessons at home. Different tutors taught him physics, maths, history, geography, music, art, wrestling, gymnastics, the sciences, Sanskrit, literature and English.

At the same time, Rabindranth's family, best known as Tagore, organised literary gatherings, Bidvajjan Samagam, to which prominent writers, journalists and thinkers of the time were invited. The Tagore household had a mixed cultural atmosphere where ancient Indian Vedic literature and Sanskrit were studied alongside modern European literature. In general, Rabindranath was brought up in a very liberal and culturally minded family. In addition, this family had made great contributions in the emergence of the 'Bengal Renaissance' which attempted to combine traditional Indian culture with Western ideas.

A nice description of Rabindranth's home atmosphere and upbringing could be found in his autobiographical sketch, *Amar Chelebela*.

An early start!

Rabindranath wrote his first rhyme when he was seven years old. His first poem, *Abhilaash* (Desire), was published in 1874 in a magazine called *Tattobodhini*. Within a short period he published a series of poems in different periodicals. These included *Bhanusingher Padavali*, which he wrote under the pen name of *Bhanusingha*. *Bhanu* is a synonym of *Rabi* which

means the sun and *Singha* is a synonym of *Nath* which denotes somebody from an aristocratic family.

Rabindranath's first book of poems was published in 1878 when he was 17 years old. In the same year, he was sent to England to study law but he did not complete his studies there and returned home two years later.' When he returned home he had a knowledge of the new era of intellectual and scientific development in Europe to add to his deep understanding of the cultural heritage of India. He was set to start his great career in Bangla literature.

Between 1884 and 1890, Rabindrath published a series of books of poems: *Chhabi O Gan* (1884), *Praktir Pratishodh* (1884), *Kadi O Komal* (1886), *Mayar Khela* (1888) and *Manasi* (1890). In the same period, he published essays, critical articles, fiction, etc.' About the same time, he published two novels, *Bouthakoranir Hat* (1883) and *Rajarshi* (1887).

Experiencing the real world

The most creative phase of Rabindranth's life began when he returned from a second visit in England in 1890. On his return he was given charge of his father's estates in different parts of Bengal, mostly Silaidah in Bangladesh. During this time, Rabindranath had the opportunity to see the everyday life of ordinary people very closely. This made him concentrate less on producing work from his imagination and instead look more to the real world. At the same time, he began to appreciate the natural beauty of Bangladesh. While travelling by a boat on the Padma, he was able to view the river, its sandbanks, flora and fauna, sunrises and sunsets, the poverty and simplicity of the people who lived by the banks, and the passions that swayed them closely. All of these things found their way into his fiction and verse.

Two of his most important contributions to Bangla literature, *Galpaguchchha* and *Sonar Tori*, were written about this time. While *Galpaguchchha* was a collection of short stories, the *Sonar Tori* was a collection of poems. His other publication of the 1890s included *Chitra* (1896), *Kalpana* (1900), *Ksanika* (1900), and *Katha O Kahini* (1900). In fact, by 1900, Rabindranath had written seven volumes of poems and forty-four short stories.

Picture: You can see a manuscript of a poem in Tagore's own handwriting on <http://members.tripod.com/scohel/page31.html>

Santiniketan

In 1901 Rabindranath left Silaidah and settled in Santiniketan in Birbhum of West Bengal. There, he established Santiniketan, one of his outstanding achievements in the field of education. His aim was to provide a place for learning where the students would be at one with nature and learn in a practical as well as spiritual manner. The idea was that the student

would live a simple life close to the teachers as well as the surrounding natural world. Assisting Rabindranath in running Santiniketan was a Roman Catholic Vedantist priest named Brhamobandhav Upadhyay. The priest first called the poet, *Viswa Kavi* (world-poet). In 1921, Santiniketan became an international university and came to be known as *Viswa Bharati*.

Sadness and honour

Rabindranath's wife died in 1902. One of his daughters died a few months later. His father passed away in 1905 and his youngest son died in 1907. These terrible years made the poet very sad and this sadness was reflected in his poetry. *Gitanjali* (Song Offerings), published in 1910, was a reflection of his mental state. He translated these verses into English for which he won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1913. He was the first Asian to receive such an honour.

He was knighted by King George of Great Britain in 1915, but denounced his knighthood in 1919, when a British general attacked unarmed Indian demonstrators on 13 April 1919 at Jallianwala Bagh at Amritsar.

Discussion/Reflection Question

Rabindranath Tagore denounced the knighthood that was conferred on him because of the British behaviour at Amritsar. If you were knighted and became 'Sir' and were famous, would you be prepared to give up this honour? If so, what might make you do it?

Productive until the end

Rabindranath kept writing till he breathed his last. In the last decade of his life he wrote the books of verses, poems written in prose format, which included *Punashcha*, *Shes Saptak*, *Patraput*, *Shyamali* and *Prantik*. About this time, he also composed some wonderful dance dramas such as *Chitrangada* (1936), *Shyama* (1939), and *Chandalika* (1938). Images of nature are given musical form in *Nataraj* (1926), *Navin* (1931) and *Shravangatha* (1934). During this time, he also wrote three novels such as *Dui Bon*, *Malancha* and *Char Adhyay*.

Rabindrath was also an amateur painter. He started painting in 1929 at the age of 68. Many of his paintings could be found in museums in India and abroad. In 1940, the University of Oxford conferred him with Doctorate of Literature at a special ceremony in Santiniketan. He passed away on 7 August 1941.

Research Question

The events at Amritsar in 1919 are amongst the most shameful in the history of the British in India. Use the internet to research what General Dyer did which so angered Rabindranth.

Overall influence

Rabindranath has written over a thousand poems and over two thousand songs on various topics, ranging from patriotic to religion, love and nature. He has composed the music of most of his songs. He has written innumerable short stories and more than two dozen plays and playlets, eight novels and many books on philosophy, religion, education and social topics. He is, perhaps, best known for writing *Amar shonar Bangla, ami tomay bhalobashi* (My Bengal of gold, I love you), the national anthem of Bangladesh:

আমার সোনার বাংলা
আমি তোমায় ভালোবাসি
চিরদিন তোমার আকাশ তোমার বাতাস
আমার প্রাণে বাজায় বঁশী ।
ও মা, ফাগুনে তোর আমার বনে
ঘ্রাণে পাগল করে –
মরি হয়, হয় রে –
ও মা অঘ্রানে তোর ভরা ক্ষেতে
আমি কি দেখছি মধুর হাসি ॥
কি শোভা কি ছায়া গো,
কি স্নেহ কি মায়া গো –
কি আচল বিছায়েছ বর্ষের মূলে,
বর্ষের কূলে কূলে ।
মা তোর মুখেই বাণী আমার কানে
লাগে সুধার মতো –
মরি হয়, হয় রে –
মা তোর বন্দন খাতি মলিত হলে,
ও মা আমি নয়ন জলে ভাসি ॥

Translated by Professor Syed Ali Ahsan:

My Bengal of gold, I love you
Forever your skies, your air set my heart in
tune
as if it were a flute,
In Spring, Oh mother mine, the fragrance from
your mango-groves makes me wild with joy-
Ah, what a thrill!
In Autumn, Oh mother mine,
in the full-blossomed paddy fields,
I have seen spread all over - sweet smiles!
Ah, what a beauty, what shades, what an
affection

and what a tenderness!
What a quilt have you spread at the feet of
banyan trees and along the banks of rivers!
Oh mother mine, words from your lips are like
Nectar to my ears!
Ah, what a thrill!
If sadness, Oh mother mine, casts a gloom on
your face,
my eyes are filled with tears!

Before Rabindranath, Bengali was written in the ancient form based on classical Sanskrit. He wrote in the common language of the people. He introduced new prose and verse forms and the use of colloquial language into Bengali literature. At that time, this was something hard to accept among his critics and scholars. But in a very short period of time his style was enthusiastically emulated by most of his contemporaries as well the generation of writers that followed.

Rabindranath is considered to be the most influential poet and writer of Bangla literature. But his self-less humanism, love of nature, timeless spirituality and concern for the prospect and predicament of the human civilization have made him the one of the most respected personalities of the world.

Comprehension Questions

1. How did Rabindranath's life as a child help prepare him for a career as a writer?
2. Name writings by Rabindranath in as many different areas as you can (e.g. poetry, novels, songs).
3. Why was Rabindranath's work in Santiniketan important?
4. How did the events of 1902-1907 influence Rabindranath's writing?

Remembering the work of a great man

It is August 1941 and you have just heard the sad news of the death of Rabindranath. Your local newspaper knows that you are an expert on history and has asked you to write an obituary for the paper. It wants to know about:

- His early life
- His work
- His achievements
- His honours

But they have told you that they have created a space for 175 words no more, no less.

So get working!

Begum Rokeya

Summary

A writer and educationalist with an interest in social reform who helped paved the way for women to play a greater part in society.

Picture: You can find a picture of Begum Rokeya at *Banglapedia* and at <http://www.emory.edu/ENGLISH/Bahri/Hossain.html>

Roquiah Khatun, commonly known as Begum Rokeya, was a writer, educationist and social reformer.' At a time when Muslim women were not expected to come out of *purdah*, she pioneered education amongst the Muslim women of Bengal.

A conservative upbringing

Rokeya was born in 1880 at Pairaband in Rangpur district. She was brought up in a conservative Muslim family which, keeping in conformity to the *purdah* system, did not consider girls fit for an English education. Rokeya, therefore, remained confined at home along with her sister to study subjects of religious interest such as Arabic. Rokeya's brothers, particularly her eldest brother, Ibrahim Saber, taught her English and Bangla. They also inspired her to write. The only chance Rokeya ever got of studying was with an English lady in Kolkata. But she had to stop her lessons because of family and social disapproval.

In 1897, Rokeya married Syed Sakhawat Hossain, a highly educated gentleman and a government officer. Syed Sakhawat, like his brothers, encouraged Rokeya to study English and Bangla and inspired her to read literary works from home and abroad. He also inspired her to write. She started writing in 1902 and continued to do so as long as she lived.

Speaking out

Rokeya used various forms of literature to express herself. She wrote short stories, poems, essays, novels and satirical writings. Her writings were full of humour and logic. She started writing in different leading literary magazines. She wrote her first story, *Sultana's Dream*, in 1905 and it was published as a book in 1908. She later translated it into Bangla.

Abarodhbasini (The Secluded Women, 1931) is a spirited attack on the extreme forms of *purdah* that she felt endangered women's lives.

Her other noted works include *Matichur* (essays 1st vol 1904, 2nd Vol. 1922), *Padmarag* (novel, 1924), *Delicia Hatya* (translation of the *Murder of Delicia*, by Mary Corelli), *Jnan-phal* (The Fruit of Knowledge), *Nari-Sristi* (Creation of Women), *Nurse Nelly*, *Mukti-phal* (The Fruit of Emancipation) etc. Rokeya also wrote fine poetry. Her poem entitled *Saogat* was published in 1918 on the first page of the first issue of the *Saogat*, a literary magazine in Kolkata.

Rokeya wrote on a wide range of subjects: social prejudice, adverse effects of the *purdah* system, women's education, social repression on women, women's rights and her progressive views of women's awakening. She also wrote against the tradition of childhood marriage and polygamy.

An educationist

While Rokeya used her power of writing in encouraging her fellow women towards education and a productive life, she at the same time put her ideas into practice as an educationist. Her commitment to women's education led her to establish a girl's school in Bhagalpur and afterwards in Kolkata, which was named after her husband.' At first she found it difficult to get Bengali girls as students because of the conservative mood in the society. However, she was so committed to her purpose that she went from house to house to persuade people about the importance of education. He also tried to convince them that *purdah* and education could go hand in hand. She was eventually successful in getting so many students in her school that she had to move to a different location with larger accommodation.

An activist

Begum Rokeya was not only a creative writer and educationist, but also an activist. In 1916, Begum Rokeya founded an organisation called *Anjuman-e-Khawatin-e-Islam* (Muslim women's society) to make women aware of their rights. The society was at the forefront of the

fight for women's education, employment and their legal and political rights. The society defrayed the cost of education for a large number of girls and arranged marriages for many poor girls. It gave shelter to orphans and the destitute and extended financial help to widows. It also established some businesses for women to earn economic independence.

Begum Rokeya died in 1932 on 9 December, the same day she was born, She is still fondly remembered not only for her creative ideas and writings for the improvement of her society but also for the way she put her thought into practice.

Comprehension Questions

1. Why was it difficult for Rokeya to obtain an English education?
2. How did Rokeya's husband help her in her work?
3. What examples can you find which prove that Rokeya was a determined woman?

Research Question

Many Muslim women of Bengal were not commonly permitted to go out for education before the time of Begum Rokeya. They had to stay in purdah. Find out about the purdah system and how the Bengali Muslim women spent their time in this period.

Discussion/Reflection Question

If someone asked you whether Begum Rokeya should be remembered most for her writing, her work in education or in women's rights, what would you say? You will need to prove what you say by referring to her role in all three areas.

Kazi Nazrul Islam

Summary

A twentieth-century poet and musician who became the National Poet of Bangladesh and who revolutionised the style of Bangla music and literature. He was imprisoned for his anti-British writings but continued to flourish until 1942 when he was seriously disabled by illness.

Picture: You can see a picture of Nazrul in his younger days at *Banglapedia* and at: <http://www.geocities.com/Paris/Louvre/2618/Nazrul.html>

Kazi Nazrul Islam is known as the National Poet of Bangladesh. He brought about revolutionary changes in the spirit and style of Bangla literature and music.

Early struggles

Nazrul was born on 24 May 1899 at Churulia village in Burdwan district of West Bengal, India.' Nazrul's family was poor and his father died when he was only nine. Therefore, he had not even completed his primary education before he had to go through a lot of struggle for existence. Later he worked as a teacher of a village *maktab*, a custodian of the shrine of a saint and as a *muezzin* in a village mosque before he joined a *leto* group. *Leto* was a mobile musical troupe which roamed around singing and acting in the countryside. He soon became the main poet of the group and made his place there by composing a number of folk plays.

Between 1910 and 1917, Nazrul was able to return to school and studied until Class X. However, he could not pursue his education further because he did not like the rules and regulations and he had financial difficulties. During this time, he worked as a cook at the house of a railway guard and later at a tea stall at Asansol. Thus the young Nazrul, aptly nicknamed 'Dukhu Mia', experienced the harsh realities of life in the very early days of his life.

The beginnings of his literary activities

During the First World War, in 1917, Nazrul joined the Bengal Regiment of the British Indian Army. He was in the army for two and a half years and rose from an ordinary soldier to a *havildar* (battalion quartermaster). His literary activities began when he was posted in Karachi Cantonment.

During his stay in the army, Nazrul learnt Persian from the regiment's Punjabi *moulvi*, practised music with other musical-minded soldiers to the accompaniment of local and foreign instruments. At the same time he pursued literary activities in both prose and poetry which were published in different literary magazines. *Baunduler Atmakahini* (Autobiography of a Vagabond), his first prose work, was published in *Saogat*, a reputed literary magazine in Kolkata.' His first poem to be published was *Mukti* (Freedom).

With the end of the war, Nazrul returned to Kolkata to start a career in literature and journalism. In 1920 he became a joint editor of *Nabajug*, an evening daily published by A. K. Fazlul Haq, the well-known politician. While Nazrul worked as a journalist, he wrote numerous poems in different literary magazines and secured his place in the literary world of Kolkata. At the same time, he met with prominent writers, poets and other literary figures of the time, including Rabindranath Tagore. Tagore and Nazrul maintained a close contact till the former died in 1941.

Influences on him

During this time, the political situation was very volatile in India. Everywhere, the Indians were involved in the non-cooperation and *khilafat* movement against the British Raj led by Mahatma Gandhi. He wrote many poems and articles in support of the struggle against the British. He wrote against the injustice, the oppression, the exploitation and the violence that was carried out all over India. He was concerned about the landless farmers and the workers and fought against social injustice through his writings. In this he was influenced by the socialist revolution in Russia that took place in 1917.

He wrote his famous revolutionary poem, *Bidrohi* (The Rebel) in 1921. He also wrote *Bhangar Gaan*, *Proloyollash* and *Kamal Pasha*. Some of these poems were published in his famous book of poems, *Agnibina* (The Fiery Lute). *Agnibina* created a stir in Bangla literature and proved to be a turning point in Bangla poetry, in terms of both content and style. Its first edition was sold out soon after publication, and several editions in quick succession had to be printed.

Reactions

Nazrul was arrested in 1922 for his anti-colonial writings. He was sentenced to a year of rigorous imprisonment. While in jail, he went into a 40-day hunger strike to protest against the mistreatment of political prisoners. During this time, Rabindranath Tagore sent his famous telegram to Nazrul that said: 'Give up hunger strike, our literature claims you.' So he stopped and continued to write while he was in jail.

Nazrul married Pramila, a girl from a *Brahmo* family in 1924, despite a lot of disapproval from society.' Many of his love songs and poems, some of them being collected in his first book of poetry, *Dolon Champa*, were inspired by his relationship with Pramila.

Political involvement

Towards the end of 1925, Nazrul formally joined politics and attended political meetings all over Bengal. Apart from being a member of the Bengal Provincial Congress, he played an active role in organising the *Sramik-Praja-Swaraj Dal*. On 16 December 1925, Nazrul started publishing the weekly *Langal*, with himself as chief editor. The *Langal* was the mouthpiece of the *Sramik-Praja-Swaraj Dal*, which aimed to end class differences in society. The manifesto of the party, which was published in the paper, demanded full independence for India. At this time Nazrul published his book *Samyabadi O Sarbahara* containing songs for workers and peasants. Among Nazrul's other publications about this time were an anthology of short stories, *Rikter Bedan*, and four anthologies of poems and songs: *Chittanama*, *Chhayanat*, *Samyabadi* and *Puber Hawa*. *Chittanama* was a collection of songs and poems that Nazrul

had composed on the sudden death on 16 June 1925 of Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das, pioneer of the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity.

A flourishing career

Nazrul's career continued to flourish, and he was involved in a variety of activities ranging from a recording artist, a composer, a music director, a singer, a poet and a story writer. He also acted in films, plays and performed on the radio. Nazrul was particularly keen on composing various forms of songs and he is said to have written even more songs than Rabindranath Tagore had.

A long illness and honours

In 1942, Nazrul became ill and this led to the loss of his voice and memory. He was treated at home and abroad, but his condition became worse. Financially, Nazrul's family went through a lot of hardship as he was the only earning member.

Nazrul was awarded the Jagattarini Gold Medal by Kolkata University. He was awarded the 'Padmabhushan' title by the Government of India in 1960. In 1972, when Rabindranath's *Amar Shonar Bangla* was declared as the National Anthem of Bangladesh, Nazrul's famous and rhythmic song, *Chal Chal Chal*, was declared as the battle song of Bangladesh. In the same year, Nazrul and his family were brought to Dhaka, by an agreement between the governments of Bangladesh and India. During the War of Liberation, the Freedom Fighters were inspired by the rebellious and patriotic songs of Nazrul which were aired by the *Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra* (Independent Bangla Radio Station), a radio station that was set up in India to inspire the freedom fighters.

Picture: You can see a picture was taken of the ailing poet on his birthday in 1972 on:

www.pabna.net.ni.htm At this time Nazrul could neither speak nor hear.

He was conferred an honorary DLitt degree by the University of Dhaka in 1974. He was granted citizenship of Bangladesh in January 1976 and came to be known as the National Poet of Bangladesh. In February the same year, he was awarded the *Ekushe Padak*, one of the most prestigious literary awards in Bangladesh.

Nazrul died on 29 August 1976, but in reality he had remained completely silent and inactive for 34 years since his illness in 1942. He was buried at Dhaka University Mosque as he had wished, with one of his *ghazals* (*Moshjideri pashey amar kobor dio bhai*).

Comprehension Questions

1. Nazrul made a contribution in many different areas. List them.
2. Why was he imprisoned and why did he go on a hunger strike whilst he was in jail?
3. What do you think Tagore meant when he told Nazrul to call off his hunger strike because 'our literature claims you'?
4. Why was there a lot of disapproval regarding Nazrul's marriage to Pramila?

Activity: Conferring an honorary degree

In 1974 Nazrul was given an honorary degree by Dhaka University. Imagine that you are making the speech explaining why he deserves the award. What would you say? Your researches have shown that he was sometimes known as '*Dukhu*', which means sadness and sometimes as '*The Rebel Poet*'. In your speech explain why either title might be appropriate.

Research Task

A. K. Fazlul Haq was to become an extremely important man in the history of Bangladesh. Find out as much as you can about him.

Jasimuddin

Summary

A twentieth-century poet and scholar of literature who focused on rural life and won many awards for his work.



Jasimuddin, from Banglapedia, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh

Jasimuddin, a renowned poet and scholar of literature, was born on 1 January 1903 in the village of Tambulkhana in Faridpur district. Jasimuddin started his formal education at Faridpur Welfare School and then he went to Faridpur District School where he completed his matriculation, or secondary level education, in 1921. He passed IA (Intermediate of Arts) from Rajendra College and gained his BA and MA from Kolkata University.

Work in Kolkata and Dhaka

Jasimuddin started his career as a collector of folk literature. He was appointed to this job while he was working as a research assistant at Kolkata University. He joined Dhaka University as a lecturer in 1937 and worked there until 1944 when he joined the government Department of Information and Broadcasting.

Jasimuddin's poetic talent developed in his student life. He wrote the famous poem, *Kabar* (the Grave) when he was a college student. The poem was included in school textbooks (Bengali syllabus for the matriculation examination while Jasimuddin was still a student at university).

A rural poet

Jasimuddin emerged as a poet among the rural people of Bangladesh. He had spent most of his childhood, adolescent and youthful years among the farmers in the countryside. His writings reflect the freshness and natural beauty of the rural world, as well as the life of the ordinary peasants with their sincerity and simplicity. He is called the *Palli Kabi* (Poet of the Countryside).

His first book of verse, *Rakhali* (Shepherd) was published in 1927. Some of his famous books are *Nakshi Kanthar Math*, *Shujon Badiyar Ghat*, *Matir Kanna* and *Bagalir Hashir Golpo*. *Nakshi Kanthar Math* and *Bangalir Hashir Golpo* have been translated into English as *Field of the Embroidered Quilt* and *Folk Tales of Bangladesh* respectively. Among these, *Nakshi Kanthar Math* and *Shujon Badiyar Ghat* are unique in terms of style of presentation as well as the way they explore the heart of picturesque rural Bangladesh.'

Honours

In 1969 Jasimuddin was awarded the DLitt by Rabindra Bharati University. He also won several other awards, including the President's Award for Pride of Performance (1958), *Ekushey Padak* (1976) and *Swadhinata Dibas Puruskar* (posthumous, 1978). In 1974 he was also selected for the Bangla Academy Award but refused it. Jasimuddin died in Dhaka on 13 March 1976 and was buried in his village.

Comprehension Questions

1. Which poem did Jasimuddin write when he was a student? Where was it included?
2. Why is rural life the main theme of his poetry?
3. Why is Jasimuddin called 'Palli Kabi'?

Research Question

Jasimuddin's most famous work is '*The Grave*'. Find out as much as you can about it, including the message Jasimuddin was trying to give when he wrote it.

Testing your friends

An excellent way to learn information is in the form of a quiz. Our section on Jasimuddin is quite short, so your friends should not have great difficulties learning about him. Get a small group together, give them 5 minutes to learn the material, then give them a test. But be careful, you might have to give a prize to the winner!

Zainul Abedin

Summary

A twentieth-century artist who won a first class degree in art from Kolkata and studied at the prestigious Slade School of Art in London. He was particularly moved by famine scenes in 1943, which he recorded. He was awarded the title '*Shilpacharya*' in 1967.

Picture: You can find a picture of Zainul Abedin at *Banglapedia* and at:

<http://www.pimediaglobal.com/projects/art/zainul>

More interested in drawing than studies!

Zainul Abedin was an artist of exceptional talent and international fame. He was born in Kishoreganj, Mymensingh, on 29 December 1914. He was admitted to the Government School of Art in Kolkata in 1933 and graduated with a first class degree in 1938. After graduation he joined the same institution as a teacher.

As a young boy, Zainul was more interested in drawing than his studies. He would draw pictures in his textbook during lessons. He was greatly inspired by the river Brahmaputra and the surrounding countryside. This is reflected in a series of his watercolour drawings which pay tribute to the river Brahmaputra. He earned the Governor's Gold Medal in 1938 for these paintings in an all-India exhibition.

The Great Famine

In 1943 the Great Bengal Famine of 1943 killed about three million people. Zainul was touched by the devastation of the Famine which was caused by the colonial policies and other reasons during the World War II and drew a series of sketches depicting the misery. Though Zainul had little material help to offer to the starving, helpless people, he paid his greatest tribute to the famine victims through his famous famine sketches.' He drew the sketches on cheap, brown packing paper with Chinese ink and a flat brush used for oil painting. This was Zainul's way of showing the world what the starving and dying Bengal people were going through.

Picture: You can see one of these sketches in a book called *Zainul Abediner Shara Jiban*, by Hashem Khan (publisher: Farid Ahmed, Somoy Prakashan, 38/2Ka, Banglabazar, Dhaka).

The move to Dhaka and a new institute

After the partition of India in 1947, Zainul left Kolkata, came to East Pakistan and settled in Dhaka. He joined a school as a drawing teacher. At that time there was very little artistic activity in East Pakistan. He, along with some friends, tried to convince the government to start an art institute. He was given the responsibility of establishing the Government Institute of Arts and Crafts in Dhaka. It started on 30 September 1948 in two rooms of the National Medical School. It was the first art school of East Pakistan and he was made the Principal-designate of the Institute. Eventually this institute grew in reputation and size to be known as the Institute of Fine Arts

The Great Master of the Arts

In 1951, Zainul attended the Slade School of Art in London, for a two-year training programme.' In 1959, his contributions were recognised by the highest award for creative artists from the Government of Pakistan, *Hilal-i-Imtiaz*. He denounced the title in 1971 during the War of Liberation. He was awarded an Honorary D. Litt. degree by the University of Delhi in 1974. He was also a Visiting Professor of Fine Arts at Peshawar University in 1965 and in Dhaka in 1973. He was appointed a National Professor of Bangladesh in 1974.

Zainul retired from the post of Principal of the Government Art College in 1967 and devoted himself to painting. He was given the title, *Shilpacharya*, the Great Master of the Arts, in the same year for his artistic and visionary qualities.

Scrolls

In 1970, he organised the *nabanna* festival at the *Shilpakala* Academy. He drew a 65-feet long and 6 feet wide scroll called *nabanna* (in Chinese ink, watercolour and wax), in celebration of the mass movement of 1969, in which he depicted the story of rural Bangladesh in phases. He started it with the abundance of golden Bengal when people were happy and in peace and went on to show how the same Bengal became impoverished under the colonial rule and the Pakistan regime and finally reached a pitiable state of poverty.

In the same year, Zainul painted another scroll, the 30 feet long and 6 feet wide *Manpura*, named after an island in the Bay of Bengal. This black ink drawing over wax outlines depicted the devastation of the terrible cyclone of 1970.

Illustrating the constitution

Soon after the liberation of Bangladesh, Zainul was invited by the Government to illustrate the Constitution of Bangladesh which he did along with three other artists. They used folk art and designs from *nakshi kantha*, the famous embroidered quilts made by rural women of Bangladesh.

Galleries

In 1975, a year before his death, Zainul Abedin set up the Folk Art Museum at Sonargaon and the *Shilpacharya Zainul Abedin Sangrahashala*, a gallery of his own works in Mymensingh. The Folk Art Museum was set up to preserve the rich but dying folk art of Bangladesh.

Features

One of the characteristics of Zainul Abedin's paintings is the black line. He has made use of the line in many of his sketches including the *Famine Sketches*. He has painted in a wide variety of styles. After his return from Slade School of Art, he began to draw in a new 'Bengali' style, where folk forms with their geometric, sometimes semi-abstract representations, the use of primary colours and lack of perspective were prominent features. Some of his well known paintings are *Dumka* (watercolour 1951), *Santals: Return* (watercolour 1951), *The Rebel Crow* (watercolour 1951), *Two Women* (gouache 1953), *Painna's Mother* (gouache 1953) and *Face* (oil painting 1971).

His last days

Zainul Abedin died of cancer on 28 May 1976. He drew his last painting, *Two Faces*, while he was lying sick at the PG Hospital just before he died. He was buried in the campus of Dhaka

University, beside the Dhaka University mosque, with access from the Institute of Fine Arts which he had founded.

Comprehension Questions

1. Why did Zainul sketch scenes from the Great Bengal Famine of 1943?
2. Why was Zainul called Shilpacharya?
3. What other great honour was shown to Zainul shortly after the liberation of Bangladesh?
4. Name 5 of Zainul's best known paintings.

Research Task

Find out more about the famines of 1943 and the plight of the people.

A poster in praise of Zainul

Zainul was a highly talented artist, so it is only fitting that we commemorate him with a picture.

Your task is to use a poster to praise Zainul's contribution to the art of Bangladesh. But take care! Sometimes 'less is more effective' on a poster. So you might want to avoid putting too much detail on your poster and just concentrate on two or three main points.

Summing it up in a spider diagram!

We have studied 8 key cultural figures in this section. To help you remember their details, draw a 'spider diagram' for each one. Write his or her name in the centre of a piece of paper and then have 5 'legs' of your spider going out to boxes. Those boxes should have headings:

Biographical details (when born, where lived etc)

What influenced them (life in the country, teachers etc)

What were their most important contributions?

Examples of their work

For the fifth box write '5 key points about X'.

Now all you have to do is fill it in!

Bangladesh Studies O Level (7094) Pilot Textbook

Topic 1 (b) General background



Purpose of this section

This section covers the:

development of Bengali literature, language, art and architecture from ancient times to contemporary Bangladesh

contribution of folk culture and other cultural practices in shaping the culture of Bangladesh.

Exam guidance

Questions in this section will be more open-ended and of a general nature, and will allow for a wide variety of examples to be used to support answers. Although candidates may draw on their knowledge of the contribution made by **any** cultural figures, a knowledge of the contribution of the following **may** prove useful (exam questions will **not** be asked specifically on them):

Farrukh Ahmed

Abbas Uddin Ahmed

Munir Chowdhury

Michael Madhusudan Dutta

Jabinanda Das

Ahsan Habib

Sufia Kamal

Hasan Raja

Zahir Raihan

Muhammad Shahidullah

S.M. Sultan.

Teachers should make full use of poetry, dance, song, drama and visits to local historical centres to enhance learning.

The emergence and development of Bengali language, literature, art and architecture

Language

Summary

Bangla is spoken by about 230 million people. It has three main periods in its development (1000-1350 AD, 1350-1800 AD, 1800-modern day). Various versions of Bangla are spoken or written today.

Bangla is the state language of Bangladesh. It is the administrative language of the Indian states of Tripura and West Bengal as well as one of the administrative languages of Kachar district, Assam. Bangla speakers number about 230 million today, making Bangla the seventh most spoken language after Chinese, English, Hindi, Urdu, Spanish, Arabic and Portuguese.

Phases of Bangla

The existence of the earliest form of Bangla language could be traced as far back as 1000 AD. The period between 1000 AD and 1350 AD is regarded as the **old phase** of the evolution of Bangla. The earliest example of old Bangla is to be found in the *Charyapada*, a collection of poems written by Buddhist monks.

The period between 1350 AD and 1800 AD is considered as the **medieval phase** for Bangla. Examples of the early form of medieval Bangla include translations of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, *Vaishnava* lyrics, poetical biographies of Sri Chaitanya, narratives and *Purbabanga-Gitika*. Some Sultans of the pre-Mughal periods patronized many of these works. During the Mughal period, an influx of Perso-Arabic words took place into the evolving vocabulary of Bangla.

The **modern phase** of Bangla language starts from approximately 1800 AD with the influence of English and this phase is now continuing. The dominant form of pre-modern Bangla was poetic, but in the modern phase, the prose form of Bangla gradually emerged. During this

period, Bangla borrowed words from Sanskrit, English and other European languages. During the 19th century, the efforts of Bengali writers contributed to the further growth of the language. Among them were Raja Rammohun Roy, Bhabanicharan Bandyopadhyay, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, Michael Madhusudan Dutt and Mir Mosharraf Hossain. In the twentieth century, writers such as Rabindranath Tagore and Pramatha Chowdhury helped turn everyday spoken Bangla into a written language.

Dialects and styles

Much of modern day Bangla comes from Sanskrit and there also Persian and English influences. The Bengali speaking people are accustomed to various dialects that differ from division to division and from one district to another. People speak in dialect at home, but generally use spoken Bangla outside and standard colloquial Bangla for academic and literary purposes. Usually, standard Bangla is used in literary and artistic work, plays and mass communication, but recently the use of dialects in these activities has increased.

There are two separate styles of writing Bengali scriptures: formal (*sadhu*) and informal (*chalit*), but most are written in *chalit*. The alphabet consists of 11 vowels and 39 consonants, making a total of 50 letters.

Comprehension questions

1. Which other languages have contributed to the Bangla language?
2. Why do you think there are so many differing forms of Bangla?

Literature

Summary

Bangla literature dates back to around 650AD, though we do not have much information on that period. Between 1200 AND 1800 AD, Bangla literary activity developed rapidly and in the early part of these years received patronage from the Muslim rulers. The modern day era of Bangla literature has seen a movement away from western influences to greater interest in Bangla literature as a whole, stimulated to a large extent by the birth of Bangladesh in 1971.

Periods

Bangla literature has a very old and rich history which can be divided into three periods: ancient, medieval and modern.

For the **ancient period**, roughly between 650 AD and 1200 AD, we do not possess much information or examples of literary works. The most famous specimen of poems of ancient Bangla that have come down to us are the 47 spiritual hymns now known as *charyapada*, composed by Buddhist monks. Because the language of these hymns is only partly understood, it is called *sandhya* or twilight language.

In the **medieval period** of Bangla literature, between about 1200 AD and 1800 AD, literary activities grew enormously. This is seen in many different ways:

Various anecdotes, rhymes and sayings particularly in relation to agriculture, as seen in the verses of *Dak and Khana*.

Vaishnava poetic narratives which tell of the romantic relationship between the Purnaic characters of Radha and Krishna. The greatest of *Vaishnava* writers was the poet Baru Chandidas, who translated poet Jaydev's Sanskrit lyrics about Radha and Krishna into Bangla.

Patronage from Muslim rulers ' particularly Sultan Alauddin Hussein Shah, his son Nasrat Shah and commander-in-chief, Paragal Khan. The 45-year rule of the Hussein Shah dynasty (1493-1538) in Bengal not only led to political, social and cultural prosperity, but also nurtured Bangla language and literature. It was during the rule of Hussein Shah that some Bengali poets began composing lyrics in special poetic form, known as *Brajabuli*. At the same time, the Bengali poets started translating famous works from Sanskrit.

This period also saw poems written on popular themes of Muslim culture. The greatest contribution of the Muslims to Bangla literature during this period was, however, the introduction of narrative and romantic poems, many of them being translations or adaptations of Arabic or Persian romances.

The **modern period** of Bangla literature started during the British colonial period. There were many influences during this time:

Between 1800 and 1850, Christian missionaries and Sanskrit scholars made an important contribution in their prose writing. Important writers at this time were William Carey (published Bangla translation of Bible in 1800), Raja Rammohan Roy (expressed his thought on social reforms in prose), Peary Chand Mitra (wrote the first novel in Bangla, *Alaler Gharer Dula*).

Between 1850 and 1900, Bengali writers, influenced by Western thought and literature, created novels and poems. One of the most important literary figures of this period is Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay who wrote fourteen novels some of which became famous. Dinabandhu Mitra wrote the famous *Nildarpan* (1860), which depicts the merciless exploitation of Bengali farmers by English indigo traders. The play played a significant role in ending indigo cultivation.

At the end of the nineteenth century, Rabindranath Tagore played a significant part in developing Bangla literature (see Section A). Following Rabindranath, many writers were influenced by the socialist revolution which took place in the Soviet Union and this can be seen in the work of people such as Kazi Nazrul Islam and Sukanta Bhattacharya.

More recent times have seen the political division of Bengal and of Bangla literature into the literature of West Bengal and the literature of East Bengal/East Pakistan. In this period amongst the most important prose writers are Kazi Abdul Wadud, Dr Muhammad Shahidullah, Abul Fazal and Ahmed Sharif. Some important novelists are Kazi Imdadul Huq (Abdullah) and Shahadat Hossain. Important poets of the time include Abdul Quadir, Bande Ali Miah, Benajir Ahmed, Jasimuddin, Ahsan Habib, Syed Ali Ahsan, Hasan Hafizur Rahman, Farrukh Ahmed and Golam Mostafa. Apart from writing poetry, Golam Mostafa also wrote *Vishwanabi* (1942), a fine biography of the prophet of Islam.

The most significant and creative phase of Bangla literature, not only of Bangladesh but also of Bangla literature as a whole, started after the birth of Bangladesh in 1971.' Every branch of Bangla literature now saw renewed interest. Some of the writers and poets you may hear of include:

Poetry: Al-Mahmud, Shamsur Rahman, Abdul Mannan Syed, Syed Shamsul Huq, Rafiq Azad, Shahid Qadri, Abu Hena Mustafa Kamal, Nirmalendu Goon, Mahadev Saha, Abul Hasan, Alauddin Al Azad, Farhad Mazhar, Humayun Azad, Khondakar Ashraf Hossain, Rudro Mohammad Shahidullah, Ruby Rahman, Quazi Rosy and Masud Khan.

Plays: Syed Shamsul Huq, Momtajuddin Ahmed, Abdullah Al-Mamun, Mamunur Rashid and Selim Al-Din.

Novels and stories: Shawkat Osman, Selina Husain, Shawkat Ali, Akhteruzzaman Elias, Abu Zafar Shamsuddin, Abu Rushd, Alauddin Al-Azad, Humayun Azad, Syed Shamsul Huq, Hasnat Abdul Hai, Bashir al-Helal, Humayun Ahmed, Rizia Rahman, Rahat Khan, Nasrin Jahan, Imdadul Huq Milon and Taslima Nasrin.

Of course, there are many others!

Comprehension Questions

1. Why do we know so little about Bangla literature before 650AD?
2. Why were the Muslim rulers important in the medieval period of Bangla literature?
3. What impact did the creation of Bangladesh have on Bangla literature?

Research Task

Pick one poet, playwright or novelist from the medieval period and one from the modern period. Find out as much as you can about their lives and contribution to Bangla literature.

The Arts

Summary

Music, painting, drama and dance all play a part in the culture of Bangladesh, as do the traditional practices of Jatra and Alpona.

Music

Music has a rich and diverse tradition. Various forms of Bangla music that developed over time included the following:

Kirtan: songs in praise of God, gods and goddess and their attributes.

Kavigan: These poetic songs date back to around the 18th or 19th century, and the singers of these songs were called *kaviyals*. The *kaviyals*, who knew religious texts and rural life very well, had to compose questions and answers as they performed. They depended on ready wit and skills in producing verse to defeat their rivals in these poetic contests. The noise and tempo of drums, *kansi*, bells, or *mandira* rose up or went down in tune with the debate.

Jatra song: The *jatra* song originated in Bangladesh in the 16th century. *Jatra* actually means a procession or other musical or dramatic performance that takes place in a temple during *puja* or other festivals. Though *jatras* also contained dialogue, song and dance were the most common.

The pala or ballad: These songs were written between the 16th and 18th centuries and are an important part of our folk culture. Some of the most well known ballads of Bengal are the *Maimansingha Gitika* and *Purbabanga Gitika*. The history of all aspects of life in Bengal is found in these ballads. Some of the popular Bangla ballads include *Mahuya*, *Maluya*, *Kanka o Lila*, *Kajalrekha*, *Chandravati*, *Kamala*, *Deoyan Bhabna*, *Dasyu Kenaramer Pala*, *Rupavati*, *Deoyan Madina* and *Alal-Dulaler Pala*. These ballads were not just popular oral performances, they have also inspired both plays and movies.

Classical music: Songs based on classical *ragas* became popular in Bengal towards the end of the 18th century. Ustad Alauddin Khan and Ustad Ayet Ali Khan are two names in classical instrumental music who are internationally known.

Early modern songs: The urbanisation that started in the early years of the 19th century saw the beginning of modern Bangla songs. Rabindranath Tagore, Dwijendralal, Rajanikanta, Atulprasad and Nazrul Islam are still held in considerable regard as they combined attractive tunes with meaningful lyrics. Although other poets tried to copy this ideal, the songs of these five poets, who draw from both classical and folk traditions, are unique. Nazrul Islam was the first to break free from the overwhelming influence of Rabindranath Tagore. One of his main contributions was to the development of the Bangla *ghazal*.

Modern songs: Modern songs drew many talented singers, varied themes, tones and style. Some of the most famous names you may hear are Hemanto Mukherjee, Kishore Kumar, Satinath, Manna De, Lata Manjeshkar, Addul Jobbar, Sabina Yasmin, Runa Laila, Abida Sultana, Abdul Hadi, Fakir Alamgir, Sadi Mohammed, Sahnaj Rohomotullah, Andrew Kishore and Mahamudduzzaman Babu. One variant of modern songs are the pop and band songs which are also becoming popular.

Bangladesh has a good number of musical instruments originally of her own. Originally country musical instruments include *banshi* (bamboo flute), *dhole* (wooden drums), *ektara* (a single stringed instrument), *dotara* (a four stringed instrument), *mandira* (a pair of metal balls used as rhythm instrument), *khanjani*, *sharinda*, etc. Nowadays, western instruments such as guitar, drums, saxophone, synthesizer etc. are being used alongside country instruments.

Painting

There is a rich tradition of painting in Bangladesh which was pioneered by [Zainul Abedin](#) (see Section A), Kamrul Hassan, Anwarul Haque, Shafiuddin Ahmed and [S.M. Sultan](#). Other famous artists of Bangladesh you may have heard of include [Abdur Razzak](#), [Qayyum](#)

[Chowdhury](#), [Murtaza Baseer](#), [Aminul Islam](#), [Debdas Chakraborty](#), [Kazi Abdul Baset](#), [Syed Jahangir](#) and [Mohammad Kibria](#), amongst many others.

Drama

Drama in Bangladesh has an old tradition and is very popular. In Dhaka more than a dozen theatre groups have been regularly staging locally written plays, as well as those adopted from famous writers, mainly of European origin. Popular theatre groups are Dhaka Theatre, Nagarik Nattya Sampraday and Theatre. In Dhaka, the Bailey Road area is known as *Natak Para*, where drama shows are regularly held. The Public Library Auditorium and Museum Auditorium are famous for holding cultural shows. The Dhaka University area is a pivotal part of cultural activities.

Dance

Bangladeshi dance is based largely on the classical form of dance as seen elsewhere in the sub-continent. There are also influences from folk, tribal and Middle Eastern dance. Among the tribal dances, particularly popular are *Monipuri* and *Santal*. Rural girls are in the habit of dancing that does not require any grammar or regulations. Bangla songs like *jari* and *shariare* presented with dance by both male and female performers.

Jatra

Jatra (folk drama) is another form of traditional culture. It draws from mythological episodes of love and tragedy. Legendary plays of heroism are also popular, particularly in the rural areas. Even just a few decades ago, *jatra* was the most popular entertainment in the countryside. Gradually, western forms of plays are replacing the traditional cultural forms like *jatra*.

Alpona

Traditional art and paintings include the *alpona* as one of the major art forms, which is a fantastic collection of designs and motifs put together in geometrical shapes. These motifs reflect the flora and fauna of Bangladesh. *Alpona*, which was once restricted to rituals held in the villages only, has now become a part of modern art and craft. No Bengali Hindu or Muslim wedding is seen without the drawing of *alpona*. On every Ekushe February, many streets and walls in the country are marked with *alpona*.

Chitro

Other forms of art and drawing, collectively called the *chitro*, include:

Ongo-Chitro - body painting

Chal Chitro - making of clay sculptures

Deh-al Chitro - painting of designs on walls

Ghot Chitro - pot painting

Ghuri Chitro - kite painting

Kira Pot Chitro - scroll paint about games

Piri Chitro - wood painting

Pot Chitro - fabric painting

Shara Chitro - painting of pot and pan lids

Kurundi Chitro - soft-reed painting

Kushti Chitro - drawing of genealogical tables of horoscopes

Mukush Chitro - mask painting.

Comprehension Questions

1. What different types of music are commonly heard in Bangladesh?
2. Name three places well-known for holding drama productions.
3. How can we tell that Alpona is very important in the culture of Bangladesh?

Research/Own Environment Question

Culture does not exist in books; it exists in the real world. Write a short account explaining when you have seen examples of the above cultural pursuits in action. Perhaps it was on an outing with your parents, or a school trip, or a special family occasion.

Architecture

Summary

As you look around you, be aware of a variety of influences 'ancient Buddhist sites and Hindu temples, distinctive Bengali mosques from the Sultanate period, small-scale imitations

of grand Mughal monuments, the majestic British colonial buildings and landmarks of Bangladeshi independence.

Ancient period

Bangladesh is a land of rivers, some of which have changed their courses over time and in that process destroyed many ancient buildings and relics. However, from the evidence which has survived it is clear that Bangladesh as West Bengal of India is rich in architectural heritage.

The most famous architectural site of ancient Bengal can be found in Mahasthangarh, which represents the earliest and the largest archaeological site in Bangladesh. 'Mahasthangarh consists of the ruins of the ancient city of Pundranagara, situated in Bogra district.

Mahasthangarh was important from fourth century BC during the Mauryan empire and continued to be so throughout the medieval period. A wide range of architectural relics and sites including Buddhist monasteries, Hindu temples and mosques, can be found there.

Hiuen Tsang, the famous Chinese traveller, visited the city in the middle of the 7th century and expressed his admiration. The royal palaces, mansions, state secretariat, luxurious villas, ornamental temples, assembly halls etc. portrayed in the old literature reflects a glowing picture of life at Pundranagara, and the writings of Sudhyakara Nandi in the twelfth century gives a brilliant account of its architecture.

Sultanate period

The architecture of the early Muslim period was most characterised by mosques and tombs. The conquerors built mosques to arrange for praying and to gain popularity. The Sufis or the preachers of Islam also built mosques wherever they went to preach. During the Hussain Shahi dynasty, Bengali architecture developed a style of its own, distinct from the various regional styles of India. Though Bengali architecture was influenced by the architecture of the Middle East in the beginning, by the middle of the fifteenth century, it showed independence from external influence and more close to local forms.'

The mosques built during the Sultanate period were divided into several categories, such as square single, multi-domed, or rectangular multi-domed. Some of the vaults were in the form of typical Bengali huts with quadrilateral sloping roofs. Some of the single or multi-domed structures had verandahs in the front. The roofs were almost always curved, with the four corner towers rising only up to roof level. There were examples of Arabic calligraphy inserted in the wall facing the west called the *Qibla* wall, which faces the direction of the holy *Kaaba*.

Hanging chandeliers were distinct features found in the mosques. The monuments were ornamented with intricate designs and terra cotta plaques.

Some of the famous and architecturally significant mosques include Adina Mosque at Hazrat Pandua (1375), Khalifatabad Mosque (mid-15th century), Gunmant Mosque (mid 15th century), Tantipara Mosque (c 1480), Darabari Mosque (1479), Chhota Sona Mosque (1493-1519) and Bara Sona Mosque (1526) at Gaur-Lakhnauti, Bagha (1522) and Kushumba Mosque (1558) in Rajshahi, and the recently excavated *Jami's* at Satghachhia and Monohar Dighi (late 15th / early 16th century) in Bara Bazar (Jessore).

Mughal period

In Bengal, the architecture under the Mughals was mostly the work of the *subahdars* under Shahjahan and Aurangzeb. During the rule of Shaista Khan, many monuments were built in the region, particularly around Dhaka. Monuments were built as small-scale imitations of the Mughal imperial monuments in northern India. The material used in the construction was plastered brick, and plaster panelling was used for ornamentation of the mosque.

Hindus erected temples at the same time across the region. These also used plaster to cover the surface and incorporated the features of the earlier Sultanate style ' such as curvilinear forms of cornice, terracotta ornamentation and the *do-chala* and *chau-chala* features.

Some of the famous mosques, tombs, temples and secular buildings built during the Mughal period are :

Mosques	Mosque of Shah Niamatullah Wali, Satmasjid, Dhanmondi Eidgah
Tombs	Dara Begum's tomb, Tomb of Haji Khwaja Shahbaz
Temples	Jor-Bangla Temple, Raja Ram Temple, Kantanagar Temple
Secular buildings	Lalbagh Fort, Pagla Bridge, Sonargaon Bridge, Sonakanda Fort, Zinjira Fort

Colonial and post-colonial period

Colonial architecture in India has been a combination of Indian and British elements. The British created the mixed style with the intention of satisfying the local people as well as upholding their own imperial style. Colonial architecture reflects majestic buildings built for residential and official purposes with lofty domes, classical pillars, semi-circular arches and

pediments. The Indian elements used in such structures created a new look, easily distinguishable from the architecture of the past. **The British colonial architecture in Bengal flaunts elegance and sophistication today, and buildings built during this period are still used as important government offices and university campuses, such as Ahsan Manzil, The High Court Building and Curzon Hall of Dhaka University.**

During the **Pakistan period**, there was initially no new, significant architectural achievement, mainly due to the absence of experienced architects and engineers. However, in the 1960s, a number of buildings of architectural importance were created, such as Kamalapur Railway Station, the Baitul Mukarram Mosque and Shilpakala Academy,

The independence of Bangladesh led to the creation of beautiful landmarks all over the country e.g. the Shahid Minar in Dhaka and the National Mausoleum in Savar, which are proof of the ingenuity and skill of Bangladeshi architects. With the spirit of nationalism and freedom after independence, the most attractive monuments of Bangladesh were built. **Bangladeshi architecture utilises new techniques and modern designs according to time and space, and the major cities of the country are adorned with skyscrapers, steel-glass structures and various other ultra-modern institutions.**

Comprehension Questions

1. Why is our knowledge of ancient architecture in Bangladesh limited?
2. What can we learn about architecture in Bangladesh from Hiuen Tsang?
3. What characterised architecture during the Muslim period?
4. Name three famous architectural sites from the Mughal period.
5. Why was architectural development limited during the Pakistan period?

Discussion/Reflection Question

Sangsad Bhaban, the Bangladesh Parliament, is said to be a great architectural creation of modern Bangladesh. Do you agree? Explain your answer.

Research Task

Make a study trip to an architectural landmark in your city or region. Find out (i) what makes

the architecture so special, and (ii) the history behind the landmark.

The contribution of folk culture and other cultural practices in shaping the culture of Bangladesh

Summary

In the Bengali way of life folk arts, crafts and religious and cultural festivals are very important. Although some of these traditions are beginning to die out, it is through such skills as the making of 'Noshki Katha' that a record of the old practices can be kept.

Folk culture

Bengali folk arts, crafts, festivals and games are interrelated. Traditional art and craft, festivals and games seem now to be in the process of extinction. The most popularly practised festivals are the religious ones.

Folk art and crafts include making of ornaments, clothes, toys, tapestry, utility items, etc. Each item that is produced is the outcome of the inner creativity of the artist and made from the gifts that nature offers in the day to day rustic life. Bengali art and craft has an extraordinary power of influencing onlookers, which include both adults and children. Every single piece of the famous 'Nokshi Katha', the hand embroidered tapestry, has a touch of the delicate fingers and workmanship of at least four female artists working at a time. The 'Nokshi Katha' depicts the Bengali rustic life through needlework, examples of which range from the 'Shapla' or the water lily (the national flower of Bangladesh) floating in the ponds, rustic boys flying kites, an adolescent shepherd playing his flute while the animals graze by or even a young girl taking food for her father or her husband who is busy harvesting the crops in the fields.' Every little aspect of village life is preserved among the threads of the tapestry. This is indeed a God-gifted quality acquired by these workers, as few of the artists have ever been to school or have had any vocational training.

Hand made ornaments are designed and worked upon both by male and female craftsmen, who produce exotic and intricate designs and sell these at a very cheap price in spite of the tremendous effort put in. Other utilitarian products like hand fans, utensils, clothes, handicrafts, also display intricate workmanship and ornamental designs.

Folk artists of Bangladesh use bamboo, cane, clay, shells, fabrics, fibre, grass, horns, leaf, leather, seeds, wood, etc. to make various traditional crafts. The fascinating items made from these raw materials have, for ages, been preserved in the various museums of the country

which, at the same time, are being used by the different strata of people living in Bengal. Most essential domestic objects, such as pots and pans made of clay, are available in miniature sizes to be used as toys by the rustic children of Bengal.

As the older artisans concentrate on making utensils and other products, their children imitate their parents and improve their own creativity. People of the influential class decorate their gardens and the interior of their houses with clay paraphernalia and terracotta. The people of Bangladesh have excelled in the production of pottery through a high degree of craftsmanship.

The silt deposits carried by great rivers like the Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna form clay, paving the way to the artistic production of clay objects. Hand made pottery is predominantly the art of rustic women. The Hindu community, comprising the Kumar and Patua castes, specialise in making a variety of dolls and toys. The big clay jars and vases are the creations of the Kumar and Patua menfolk.

Religious and cultural festivals

Bangladesh enjoys a variety of festivals. The Bengali word for festival is *utsob*, which means assembly of people and merry-making. Traditional folk festivals have variety, colour, fun and entertainment. Other than the religious ones, most festivals are seasonal and are secular in nature. The religious festivals are practised to attain divine blessings, some of which are parts of religious traditions. Devotional lyrics addressed to the beauty of nature and the philosophy related to it serve as an inspiration to life.

Melas or festivals could also include an exhibition of handicrafts of the cottage industries, folk crafts and games played as competitions, carnivals, dances, musical performances, comic plays, *jatra* (open stage Bengali drama), circus, fireworks and gambling.

Some of the religious festivals and fairs of the different religions are :

Muslim	Muharram (Islamic New Year), Eid-e-Miladunnabi (birth and death anniversary), Eid-ul-Azha , Eid-ul-Fitr
Hindu	Dhol Jatra, Durga Puja, Saraswati Puja, Laxmi Puja
Buddhist	Buddho Purnima, Maghi Purnima, Tithi Puja, Ashwri Purnima

Christian	Christmas, Easter
Common	Pahela Boishakhi (Bengali New Year), Bijoy Mela of 16 December (Victory celebration), Ekushey Boi Mela Ekushey February, Nabanna Utshob (festival to celebrate the harvesting), Chaitra Sankranti
Tribal	Noboborsho, Roth Tana Utshob

Research Task and Discussion/Reflection Question

1. Ekushey February is remembered every year. What happened on 21 February in 1952? How do Bangladeshis observe Ekushey February every year?
2. International Mother Language Day was proclaimed by UNESCO in 1999 and is observed every year on 21 February by member states of the United Nations. Find out more about this day. Why do you think 21 February was chosen?

Discussion/Reflection Question

'Folk culture and the celebration of religious festivals are a highly important part of Bengali life.' Discuss this statement.

Choose at least five of the festivals mentioned above and write about, or discuss, their significance in the context of Bangladesh.

The contribution of various cultural figures: some examples

Summary

We have already discussed the lives and works of some of the major cultural figures (Section A). However, there are many more important personalities who have contributed to the growth and development of the literature and culture of Bangladesh.' What follows are brief notes on some of the contributions.

Farrukh Ahmed

Farrukh Ahmed lived between 1920 and 1975. He was **a modern poet** and wrote on the theme of Islamic rejuvenation. He is widely known as the poet of the Islamic Renaissance in Bengal. Farrukh was a student of Philosophy at university, but he discontinued his studies due to his excessive love for poetry. Some of his popular writings include *Hatem Taiee*, *Pakhir Basha*, *Rajrajra* and *Koran Monjusha*.

Abbasuddin Ahmed

Abbasuddin Ahmed was born in a conservative Muslim family in 1901. From childhood, he was very religious and a firm lover of **music**. Abbasuddin never had any formal training in music.

During Abbasuddin's time, music and its practice were rare in Muslim homes.' Music was considered more of a Hindu tradition in Bengali society, and as such, most singers during those times were Hindu and rarely Muslim. Yet, Abbasuddin persevered and the two songs of his first gramophone record, '*Kon birohir ayan jole badol jhare go*' and '*Sharan parer ogo priyo*', made him popular all over Bengal. Abbasuddin reached the climax of his career when Kazi Nazrul Islam wrote songs for him to sing. One such song was '*Snighdha Shyam Beni Barna*', which is still one of the most popular songs of Bengal.

It greatly disappointed Abbasuddin that although the Hindu community had many songs to celebrate their festivals, the Muslims had none. This led him to write the popular Eid song *Romjaner Oi Rojar sheshey elo khushir Eid*. During the British period, most political meetings used his popular songs. He took active part in the anti-colonial upheaval in the British India. Abbasuddin died in 1959, but the melodies of his songs have remained fresh."

Munier Chowdhury

Munier Chowdhury is one of the most famous **playwrights** of post-1947 period.

He is also remembered for his role as a pioneer in the Language Movement. Even today, Munier's play *Kabar* (Grave) is one of the most popular and successful plays in the history of Bengali performing arts.

Michael Madhusudan Dutt

Michael Madhusudan Dutt was born in 1824 and is renowned for his work on classical and contemporary **dramas**. The dramas he wrote were influenced by Sanskrit, Greek and English plays. His first play, '*Sharmishtha*', written in 1859 brought him under the limelight. In 1860, he wrote '*Padmavati*', and then '*Krishnakumar*' in 1861, the first historical play in Bangla where he followed the style of a Greek tragedy. Madhusudan was a brilliant man and it is said' that

he would have several writers sitting around him, each responsible for a different piece of work, to whom he would dictate his creation, one after the other, during the same writing sessions.

Jibananda Das

Jibananda Das (1899-1954) was a contemporary of Kazi Nazrul Islam. He was a remarkable **poet** and was the one who influenced many poets of the 1960s and 1970s. *Jharapalak*, written in 1927, was his first book of poems. *Banalata Sen* written in 1942 is one of his most famous poems, so is *Ruposhi Bangla*, which was a posthumous publication in 1957. After Rabindranath and Nazrul, Jibananda Das' appears to be the most well-read poet of his generation.

Ahsan Habib

Ahsan Habib (1917-1985) was a **poet and journalist**. Ahsan Habib started writing while still a student. His first poem, *Mayer Kabar Pade Kishor*, was published in the school magazine in 1934 when he was student of Class X. His first collection of poems was *Ratrishes* (1947). He wrote a number of children's books, among them *Jyotsna Rater Galpa*, *Brsti Pade Tapur Tupur* (1977) and *Chhutir Din Dupure* (1978). He received several awards for his literary achievements, among them the UNESCO Literary Prize (1960-61), the Bangla Academy Award (1961), Adamjee Literary Prize (1964), Ekushey Padak (1978) and Abul Mansur Ahmed Memorial Prize (1980).

Begum Sufia Kamal

Begum Sufia Kamal (1911-1981) is an important **poet and social worker**. Sufia's first poem, *Basanti*, was published in 1926. Her first book of poems, *Sanjher Maya*, was published in 1938, which won her literary acclaim in Bengal. Kazi Nazrul Islam penned the foreword of her book, and commended Sufia as the 'new star in the horizon of Bengali poetry'. Even Tagore, in a letter to Sufia, wrote 'You have a high place in Bangla literature, as constant and fixed as the Pole Star. In 1948, Sufia became the first editor of the magazine '*Begum*', one of the most widely acclaimed and oldest women's magazine in Bangla. Later, she went on to become the co-editor of another weekly magazine, *Sultana*.

Apart from writing more than a dozen volumes of poetry, Sufia wrote short stories, travelogues and an autobiography called *Ekale Amader Kal*.

Begum Kamal was also an active social worker. In 1929, she joined a Muslim women's association called the 'Anjuman-i-Khawatin-i-Islam' founded by Begum Rokeya. The association gave women a platform to discuss matters relating to them, to promote education and bring about social reform" Begum Sufia Kamal actively took part in the Language

Movement to protest against the suppression of Bengali culture and Bangla by the ill motivated Pakistani government. At the time of war, Sufia penned the incidents going round her in the war, her thoughts, feelings and emotions in two diaries, *Ekattarer Diary* (Diary of '71) and *Mor Jaduder Smadhi Pare* (Where My Darlings Lie Buried). The latter diary was a poetic one, recalling the barbarity of the Pakistani army and the burning desire of the freedom fighters of Bangladesh to liberate their country.

Hasan Raja

Hasan Raja (1854-1922) was a **mystic poet and folk singer**. Hasan Raja composed about a thousand mystic songs in regional dialects and simple but engaging tunes. Local *bauls* and *fakirs* performed his songs which made him nationally famous. Like the songs of Lalou Shah, Hasan Raja's songs rise above communalism and are true for both Hindus and Muslims.

Zahir Raihan

Zahir Raihan was the pioneering **film-maker** of Bangladesh and made films in Urdu and English as well in Bangla. The first film directed by him, *Kakhono Asheni*, was released in 1961 and was followed by at least seven more films in quick succession. But his untimely death after the birth of Bangladesh (in fact, he disappeared mysteriously) brought an end to a great career. Zahir Raihan's most famous film was *Jiban Theke Neya*, which depicted the autocratic rule of Pakistan and inspired people to rise up against the Pakistani rulers.

Mohammed Shahidullah

Mohammed Shahidullah made an important contribution to our understanding of the **history of Bangla language and literature**. Soon after the birth of Pakistan in 1947, the central government of Pakistan planned to impose Urdu as the state language of West Pakistan and East Pakistan, ignoring Bangla which was spoken by more than 98 per cent of the population. Dr Shahidullah said, 'It is a reality that we are Hindus and Muslims; but the greater reality is that we are all Bengalis. '

S.M. Sultan

Now it is your turn to find out about this important figure!

Activity

Make a chart and use the internet to make notes for each of the above cultural figures on the following areas of their life:

when they were living

where they were born

which aspect of culture they contributed to (e.g. art)

what influenced/inspired them

why they are important.

Discussion/Reflection Question

Who is your favourite Bengali writer/playwright/poet/artist and why? Explain your answer using examples of his/her work.

Activity

Make a poster on your favourite writer/playwright /poet/artist and hang it up on your classroom wall. Use pictures and colours to liven up your poster.

Bangladesh Studies O Level (7094) Pilot Textbook

Topic 2 (a) Ancient Bengal



Purpose of this chapter

This chapter covers Topic 2 of the five History & Culture Topics in the syllabus for the Cambridge GCE Ordinary Level Bangladesh Studies (syllabus 7094). It introduces candidates to the historical developments in Bengal before the Mughal Empire, from the fourth century BC until the 16th century AD:

- ancient Bengal (**Topic 2a**)
- early kingdoms in Bengal (**Topic 2b**)
- Muslim rule in Bengal (**Topic 2c**)
- rule of the independent Sultans (**Topic 2d**).

Acknowledgment: Most of the information for this chapter has been derived and adapted from Banglapedia, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh.

Topic 2a: Ancient Bengal

Summary

It is difficult to find out about Ancient Bengal before the 4th century AD. What we do know is that it was divided into six areas called *janapadas*. For a while, Bengal was controlled by the Mauryas and later the Guptas.

Introduction

We know that the history of Bengal (by which we mean modern-day Bangladesh and West Bengal in India) can be traced back more than 2,500 years. However, we cannot be sure of much of its history until around the 4th century AD because there are so few historical sources that have survived. However, after the 4th century AD, when the Gupta Empire began to rule India, more reliable written records became available.

For the period before the 4th century AD, historians have tried to get a sense of what happened from scanty references found mainly in various religious texts which were not usually intended to be accurate historical documents.

In the earliest phase of its history, Bengal is thought to have been divided into six territorial units, each of them representing a janapada (human settlement). The janapadas were:

Vanga: probably part of today's 24 Pargana Districts of India and the Khulna Division of Bangladesh.

Pundra: situated in the district of Bogra and adjacent areas. From archaeological sources, it is known that the capital of Pundra, Pundranagara, was the earliest urban centre in Bangladesh.

Radha: (also described as Rarha, Ladha) probably included a large part of the modern Indian state of West Bengal. This janapada had important centres of trade, commerce and administration in the ancient as well as medieval period.

Gauda: lay to the north-west of Bhagirathi (Hughly) river and its core area was Murshidabad. Gauda was the capital city of many rulers of ancient and medieval Bengal.

Samatata: in the Meghna river valley. It appears to have consisted of Comilla and Noakhali areas of Bangladesh and some areas of Tripura in India.

Harikela: identified as Chittagong and its adjacent areas.

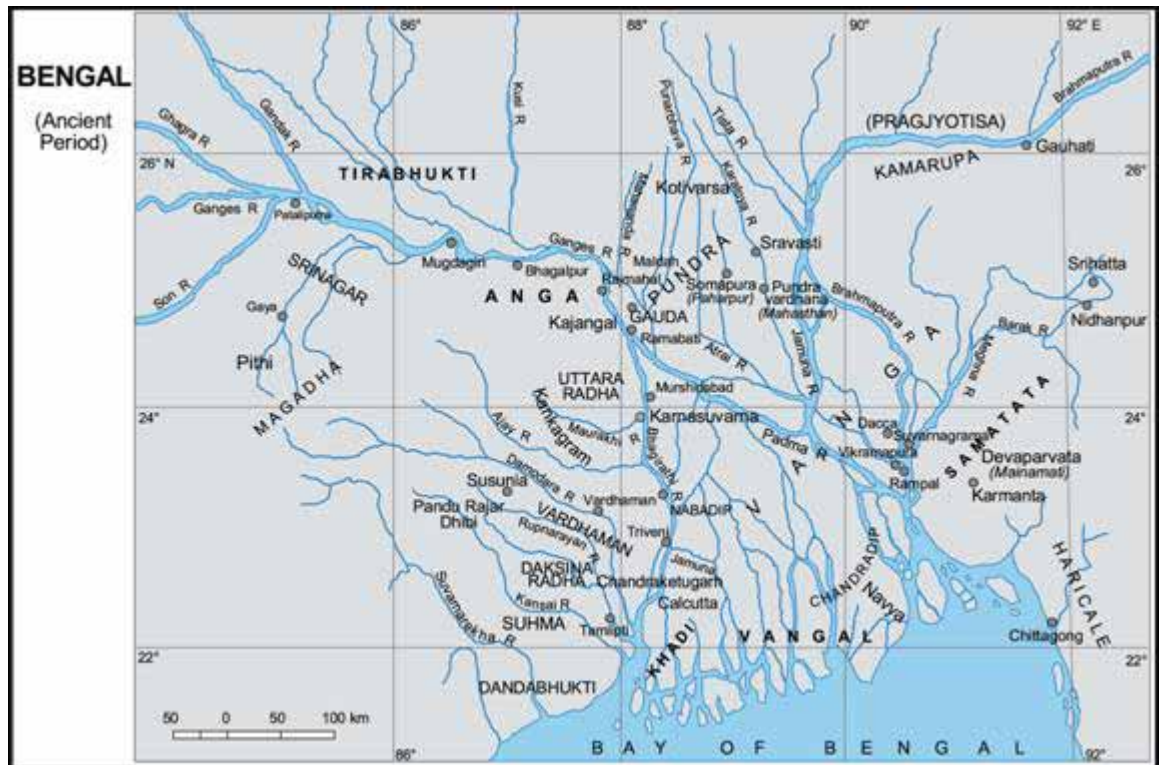


Figure 2.1 Ancient Bengal (source: Banglapedia, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh)

Bengal during the Maurya Empire

First Chandra Gupta
Maurya established
Mauryan Empire in
India and its came
north Bengal in the
third century BC.

The first great and well-organised empire of the Subcontinent was the **Mauryan Empire** (c. 320--180 BC). Mauryan rule was established in Bengal by **Emperor Asoka**. During the time of the Mauryas, Bengal probably continued to be divided into the different janapadas, and the janapada called Pundra formed part of the Empire's eastern province. Mahasthangarh of Bogra was probably the provincial capital of the region.

The western part of Bengal also achieved importance during the Mauryan period because vessels sailed from its ports to Sri Lanka and South-East Asia. Buddhism arrived in Bengal during the Mauryan era. From Bengal, Mahinda, the son of Asoka, one of the most famous Emperors of the ancient world, carried the message of Buddhism to Sri Lanka.

Weaving

We can learn from the Arthashastra of Kautilya (written in 3rd century BC) that the tradition of weaving fine cotton cloth in Bengal goes back at least as far as the Mauryan period. The Arthashastra includes references to the fine cotton fabric of Vanga (south-eastern Bengal) as an important item of trade throughout India. Greek and Latin writers of around the same period also mention it.

Bengal under the Guptas

The period between Mauryas and Guptas

We know little about the history of Bengal from the fall of the Mauryas (2nd century BC) to the rise of the Guptas (4th century AD). In the first century AD, the Aryans came to Bengal looking to conquer new lands to win prosperous trade. There is some evidence that Bengal continued to flourish during this time. It is known from the accounts of Greek scholars, such as Ptolemy, that in the first two centuries AD there was a powerful Bengal kingdom with its capital at Gange, a great market town on the banks of the Ganges. We also have evidence of widespread trade between Bengal and China, as well as other countries during this time.

Independent states come under Gupta rule

It is likely that on the eve of Gupta expansion under Samudragupta, the greatest of the Guptas, (4th century AD) Bengal remained divided into independent states. However, by about the middle of the 4th century AD, most independent states came under Samudragupta's rule. Samatata remained outside his empire, but was reduced to the status of a tributary state. It is probable that the Gupta won control over Samatata eventually, as by the end of the 6th century AD this area appears to have been ruled by a king with his name ending with Gupta (Vainyagupta). Several copper-plates of 5th century Gupta emperors (Kumaragupta and Budhagupta) found in northern Bengal prove that Gupta rule was by then well established in that area.

The golden age

Under Gupta rule, Bengal was an important province. Bengal is believed to have come under Gupta rule in the 4th century AD. The period of the Guptas is generally considered to be the 'golden age' of Indian history. During this period, India was controlled by a strong central government, which brought peace and prosperity and political stability for a considerable time. This period is remarkable for its trade and commerce, in which Bengal participated fully. For example, Fa-hsien, a Chinese visitor at that time, stated that Tamralipti (located on the bank of the Ganges in West Bengal) was a great trading emporium. The discovery of a large number of Gupta coins and ornaments in Bengal prove the economic prosperity of the region under the Guptas.



Figure 2.2 Gupta coin (source: Banglapedia, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh)

The period is also remarkable for **religious toleration**. The Gupta monarchs embraced **Brahmanism and styled themselves *Paramabhagavatas* or *Paramadaivatas***. But they also patronised Buddhism and Jainism. This indicates that there was religious toleration and coexistence of **religious beliefs**. The artistic excellence of the Gupta age is also well known and it influenced the artistic tradition of Bengal. The **Gupta School** inspired the Bengal style of sculptural art.

Gupta rule in Bengal weakens

Towards the end of the sixth century AD, the Gupta rule in Bengal weakened and around 600 **AD, Shashanka, a minor military officer of the Guptas, became ruler of Bengal. Shashanka's rise marked a new era in the history of Bengal.**

Comprehension Questions

1. Why is it difficult to find out about Bengal before the 4th century AD?
2. What benefits did Mauryan rule bring to Bengal?
3. Is it true that we know nothing about Bengal between the Mauryas and the Guptas? Explain your answer.

Discussion/Reflection Question

What can you glean from the text about the religious background and outlook of the Mauryas and the Guptas?

Building on your knowledge

The Gupta period has been described as a 'golden age' for Bengal. Why is this? See if you can find additional material to support this view.

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Topic 2 (b) Early kingdoms in Bengal



Purpose of this section

This section covers the early kingdoms of Bengal. You will learn about:

- the empire of Sasanka
- the Pala dynasty
- the Sena dynasty
- the independent kingdoms of south-east Bengal.



Summary

Between the seventh and thirteenth centuries, Bengal saw a number of independent kings and also came under the control of powerful dynasties such as the Pala and Sena dynasties. In south-eastern Bengal, independent kingdoms such as those controlled by the Khadga, Deva, Harikela, Chandra and Varman rulers had great influence.

At a glance: early kingdoms in Bengal

Western and northern Bengal	South-eastern Bengal
<p>Shashanka Empire: 600--625 AD Pala Dynasty: 756--1098 AD</p>	<p>Independent kingdoms of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Vanga: 6th century AD■ Khadga: 7th century AD■ Deva Dynasty: 8th century AD■ Harikela: 9th century AD

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chandras: 10th--11th century AD Varman: 11th century AD
Sena Dynasty: 1098--1204 AD	

The Empire of Shashanka

The first Bengal kingdom

Shashanka (c. 600 AD-625 AD) was the first independent king of ancient Bengal. Until he came to power, Bengal was ruled by distant empires such as the Mauryas and Guptas. But Shashanka was a local ruler and he not only established the first Bengal kingdom, but also extended his political influence well beyond the boundaries of Bengal.

Extending political influence

Shashanka first established himself in Gauda, the north-western region of Bengal, and made Kornosubora in Murshidabad his capital. He gradually extended his authority in Orissa, parts of Central Provinces as well as in Bihar, though his attempts to establish his authority further north lasted for only a short period.

However, the most important contribution of Shashanka in the history of Bengal was that he defended the independence of the Gauda empire against a very powerful northern Indian adversary, Harsavardhana. For a king of Bengal, it was a great show of strength to have ventured into northern Indian politics. So he can be seen as the first important king of Bengal, who for the first time brought her into competition with other states for control of northern India. In this sense, he was the forerunner of the aggressive northern Indian policy of the later Pala rulers such as Dharmapala and Devapala.

Religious controversy

Shashanka was probably a follower of Hinduism. His main political enemy, Harsavardhana, was Buddhist. Therefore some writers close to Harsavardhana have depicted Shashanka as a persecutor of Buddhists. For instance, Hiuen Tsang, a famous Chinese tourist of the time, remarked that Harsavardhana was born to punish Shashanka, a hater of Buddhist religion. But evidence suggests it is not true that Shashanka persecuted Buddhists. There was, for example, a flourishing Buddhist University at Nalanda where Hiuen Tsang himself studied for some time, as well as a number of Buddhist monasteries in Shashanka's kingdom, including the Raktamrttika-Mahavihara near Karnasuvarna, the capital city of Shashanka.

The Pala Dynasty

Condition of Bengal before the emergence of the Palas: disorder

After the death of Shashanka, there was a period when no one strong leader dominated and there were few kings who were able to rule for more than a year. Bengal also came under attack from foreign invaders. This state of **lawlessness and disorder** caused by internal as well as external forces lasted for more than a hundred years until the Palas took control of Bengal.

The period between the fall of Shashanka and the rise of the Palas has been described in some sources as **matsyanyayam**. This means **complete lawlessness arising out of the absence of a strong ruling power capable of enforcing law and order**.

Gopala: bringing an end to disorder

This period of disorder was finally brought to an end by **Gopala** (c.756-781 AD). He not only brought an end to a long spell of disunity and chaos in Bengal, but also established the Pala Dynasty, which successfully ruled Bengal for about four hundred years.

Gopala is said to have been elected by local people who wanted him to bring an end to the disorder in Bengal. Gopala did not disappoint. **During his rule of about 25 years (c.756 - 781), he not only ended the matsanyayam, but seems to have consolidated the rule of his dynasty to such an extent that his son and successor, Dharmapala, could embark upon a policy of expansion.** We do not have adequate sources to know about the details of Gopala's reign, but some historians believed that he annexed almost the whole area of north and east Bengal, though south-east Bengal remained outside his control.

Dharmapala: the greatest ruler of the Pala Dynasty?

The son and successor of Gopala, **Dharmapala** (781-821 AD), was the second and **considered to be the greatest ruler of the Pala Dynasty of Bengal. He** not only consolidated his power in Bengal, but also extended his kingdom from **Bengal to Bihar**. It is possible that Dharmapala extended his sphere of influence as far as the **north Indian region of Kanauj**.

Dharmapala was a Buddhist. He is credited with the foundation of the **Vikramshila monastery, which was one of the most important Buddhist seats of learning in India from the 9th to the 12th centuries AD. Somapura Mahavihara at Paharpur was also a creation of Dharmapala.** He was equally enthusiastic in his patronage of the **Brahmanical shrines**. He followed a policy of **religious toleration and mutual co-existence of different religions**, which was one of the glorious legacies of Pala rule in Bengal.

A glimpse of Bengal under Dharmapala is reflected in the accounts of Arab geographers and merchants like Sulaiman (died 851 AD), Ibn Khurdadbeh (died 912 AD), Idrisi (born end of 11th century AD) and Masudi (died 956 AD), who mention that the king of Bengal was engaged in a struggle with the Rastrakutas (Balhara) and the Gurjaras (Jurz). All of them mention Bengal's flourishing **sea-trade in the 9th and 10th centuries**, in which the Arabs had a

fairly dominant role. Hudud-ul-Alam, a Persian work (982-83 AD), records that Dharmapala (Dahum), did not regard anybody as greater than himself and had an army of 300,000.

Devapala: following the footsteps of his father

The third ruler of the Pala Dynasty was **Devapala** (821-861 AD), the son of Dharmapala.

Devapala had a long reign and he proved to be a worthy successor of Dharmapala and, like him, made attempts to increase the influence of Bengal in the adjacent areas. He conquered a large area of northern India as well as Orissa and Kamarupa.

Devapala, a devout Buddhist, was a great patron of the religion and the famous Buddhist seat of learning at Nalanda. He is known to have granted five villages to be endowed to the monastery built at Nalanda by Balaputradeva, the Shailendra king of Java and Sumatra. This shows Devapala's friendly relationship with the rulers of Buddhist kingdoms of South East Asia and the important position of Nalanda in the Buddhist world. Devapala was also the patron of Viradeva, whom he appointed to preside over the Nalanda monasteries.

Other Pala kings and the collapse of the empire

The period of Pala dominance came to an end with the death of Devapala, as later kings were weak and often fought amongst each other for the right to succeed. For the next hundred years, the Pala empire shrank in the face of foreign attacks, particularly by Chandela and Kalchuri kings.

The reign of **Mahipala I** (995-1043 AD) brought back vitality and vigour and gave a second lease of life to the Pala Empire. He succeeded in recapturing lost territories in northern and western Bengal and restored Pala dynastic rule to a firmer footing. Mahipala I captured a place in popular imagination by his public welfare works and his name survived for a long period in ballads and folklore.

But Mahipala was not succeeded by strong kings, and after his death the Pala empire once again began to decline. Foreign invasions led to the breaking up of the empire into small pieces and there was internal instability, including a rebellion known as the 'Kaivarta Rebellion' in north Bengal.

Then, **Ramapala** (1082-1124 AD), succeeded in retrieving the position of the dynasty by recapturing northern Bengal and also extending his empire towards Orissa, Kamarupa and madhyadesha of northern India.

Ramapala tried to establish peace and discipline in Bengal and built Ramavati, the new capital, close to modern-day Maldah. Much of what we know about Rampala comes from 'Ramacharita', a biography written by Sanhakara Nandi, a poet of ancient Bengal.

However, the second lease of life which the Pala Dynasty experienced under Rampala proved short-lived, and a series of weak kings were unable to prevent the collapse of the Pala Dynasty.

Comprehension questions

1. What was the most important contribution of Shashanka?
2. Why was the period after Shashanka known as '*matsyanyayam*'?
3. Give two reasons for the end of the period of dominance by the Pala kings.

Discussion/Reflection question

What can you glean from the text about the religious background and outlook of the Shashanka, Pala, Sena and Deva empires?

Using the evidence

One of the most enjoyable parts of studying history is using information to argue a case. The text in the section tells us that Dharmapala was considered to be the greatest ruler of the Pala Dynasty. You are going to dispute this!

Prepare a speech lasting just one minute under the heading: 'Other Pala kings were much more important than Dharmapala.'

Make sure you find the right information to support your view.

The Sena Dynasty

The Sena Dynasty was established in Bengal as the power of the Pala Dynasty declined towards the end of the eleventh century. The Senas originally belonged to the Mysore region of South India, and they were Brahma-Ksatriyas (those who were Brahmanas (priests) first and became Ksatriyas (warriors) afterwards).

Samanta Sena: the founder

The founder of the Sena Dynasty in Bengal was **Samanta Sena**, who first settled in **Radha on the banks of the Ganges**. However, as he did not actually establish a kingdom, he is not regarded as the first ruler of the Sena Dynasty.

Hemanta Sena and Vijaya Sena: the first rulers

This honour belongs to his son, **Hemanta Sena**, who ruled as a feudal king under the Pala Emperor Ramapala. Hemanta Sena's son, **Vijaya Sena** (1098 AD--1160 AD), at first also ruled as a feudal king under Rampala, but he gradually consolidated his position in Western Bengal and ultimately laid the **foundation of the independent rule of the Senas**. Most probably, Vijaya Sena established his own supremacy in **North and North Western Bengal** by ousting the Palas sometime after 1152-53 AD. Vijaya Sena is also recorded to have extended his hold over **Bihar in the west and Vanga (south-eastern Bengal) in the east**. Vijaya Sena's first capital was in **Vijayapura** and his second at **Vikramapura** in the Dhaka district.

Vallala Sena: ends Pala Dynasty

Vijayasena was succeeded by his son, **Vallala Sena** (1160 AD--1178 AD). Since it was during his reign that the last Pala ruler of **Magadha, Govindapala, lost his kingdom**, it is probable that Vallala Sena played a significant part in the downfall of the Pala Dynasty. It is **also known that during the lifetime of his father, Vallala Sena conquered Mithila**.

Vallala Sena was a great **scholar and renowned author**. He wrote the **Danasagara** in 1168 and started writing the **Adbhutasagara** in 1169 but could not complete it. Like his father, he was also a worshipper of Shiva. It is learnt from the Adbhutasagara that in his old age Vallala Sena left the responsibility of his government to his son Lakshmana Sena. He and his wife spent their last days on **the bank of the Ganges near Triveni**.

Lakshmana Sena: disintegration of the dynasty

Lakshmana Sena succeeded his father in 1178, though he had already shown great skills as a warrior during his father's reign, defeating the king of **Gauda and Varanasi (Kasi)** and **making expeditions against Kamarupa and Kalinga**.

Lakshmana Sena's reign was famous for **remarkable literary activities**. He himself wrote many **Sanskrit poems and completed the Adbhutasagara**, which was started by his father. His court contained renowned poets like **Jayadeva, the author of Gitagovinda, Dhoyi, the composer of Pavanduta and Sharana**. Lakshmana Sena was famous for his **exceptional qualities and generosity**. He, however, became too weak to control the administration of his empire towards the close of his reign. During this time, **there were signs of disruption and disintegration within his kingdom**. A number of independent chiefs seized power in different parts of the Sena kingdom, which broke its solidarity and paved the way for its decline.

However, the major blow to Sena rule came when the Muslim ruler, Muhammad Bakhtiyar Khalji, advanced into Bengal and defeated Lakshmana Sena at Nadia in 1204 AD. **Lakshmana Sena lost control of north and north-west Bengal and for the final two years of his life he ruled only east Bengal.** After the death of Laksmanasena in 1206 AD, his two sons **Vishvarupa Sena** and **Keshava Sena** tried to restore Sena power, but it was the death of their father which really marked the end of Sena rule in Bengal.

The independent kingdoms of South-East Bengal

Until the rise of the Sena Dynasty, the whole of Bengal did not come under one central rule. **Though powerful kings mentioned earlier, such as Shashanka and Dharmapala, consolidated their power in western and northern Bengal, they were more interested in extending their rule further north in India than in the rest of Bengal.** So until the arrival of the Senas, a number of independent kingdoms existed in **south-eastern Bengal**.

As early as the first half of the sixth century AD, south-eastern Bengal saw the establishment of an independent kingdom, the kingdom of **Vanga**.

In the second half of the 7th century AD, when the later Guptas captured power in Gauda (western Bengal), south-eastern Bengal was controlled by the **Khadga** kings. We know about **three generations** of Khadga kings who were ruling Samatata (Comilla-Noakhali area), with their capital at **Karmanta-Vasaka** (identified with Badkamta near Comilla).

South-eastern Bengal emerged as a kingdom of considerable size and strength under the **Deva Dynasty** in the 8th century AD, with its capital at **Devaparvata** (probably a city in the Mainamati-Lalmai area). **Four generations of rulers (Shantideva, Viradeva, Anandadeva and Bhavadeva)** ruled Samatata and they were contemporaries of the early Pala kings, who controlled northern and western Bengal and Bihar.



Figure 2.3 Relic from the Deva Dynasty (source: Banglapedia, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh)

The Devas were Buddhists, and under their patronage the Mainamati area rose to prominence as an important Buddhist cultural centre. The remains unearthed through archaeological excavations at Mainamati prove the existence of a few Buddhist Viharas (Buddhist religious and educational establishments) -- namely, Shalvan Vihara, Ananda Vihara and Bhoja Vihara, built by the Deva rulers near their capital city of Devaparvata. The Deva rule lasted from around 740 AD to 800 AD.



Figure 2.4 Mainamati (source: Banglapedia, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh)

In the 9th century AD, south-eastern Bengal was dominated by the kingdom of **Harikela**, which may have controlled the area from Chittagong to Comilla. The first independent ruler of this kingdom was **Kanti Deva**, but we know little about him or his descendants.

The **Chandras** followed the Harikela rulers, and from the beginning of the 10th century AD **five generations of Chandra rulers** (Trailokyachandra, Srichandra, Kalyanachandra, Ladachandra and Govindachandra) ruled for **about 150 years (c 900-1050 AD)**. **Their empire embraced a large area in Vanga and Samatata, comprising the whole of southern and south-eastern Bangladesh and extending as far northeast as Sylhet area.** Their capital was at **Vikrampur in present-day Munshiganj district.** The Chandras were powerful and could match the power of the contemporary **Palas of northern and western Bengal.** **Srichandra was the greatest ruler of the dynasty and under his vigorous rule the Chandra kingdom expanded into Kamarupa (Assam).**

In the last quarter of the eleventh century AD, the **Varman** Dynasty, taking advantage of the **Kaivarta rebellion in the Pala Empire**, established their independent rule in south-eastern Bengal. **Five generations of the Varmans ruled for less than a century (c 1080--1150 AD)** before they were toppled by the Senas. However, we know only about four of these rulers – **Jatavarman, Harivarman, Samalavarman and Bhojavarman.** The Varmans were Hindus and their capital was also at Vikramapur.

The rulers of south-eastern Bengal commanded the sea trade through the vast coastal area of the Chittagong-Comilla region. The accounts of the Arab merchants and navigators, written between 9th and 11th century AD, contain evidence of a flourishing sea trade in the coastal area of south-eastern Bengal, specially through the **port, which the Arabs called 'Samandar', identified with the area near present-day Chittagong.** **We also have evidence of boat-building industries during the period.** The picture of a flourishing sea-trade emerges very clearly, and there is no doubt that the area was very wealthy. The rulers were wealthy enough to issue **silver coins, large numbers of which have been found across south-east Bengal.**

Comprehension questions

1. Who were the Senas? Where did they come from?
2. Why has Lakshana Sena been praised as a great leader?
3. How do we know that south-eastern Bengal flourished during the period of the independent kingdoms?
4. What religion were the Devas?

Testing your friends

An excellent way to learn information is in the form of a quiz. Let's do this for the section on the Senas and the independent kingdoms of south-eastern Bengal. Pick a friend and give him 10 minutes to learn the section. Then give him or her a 10 question test. Next time we do this activity it will be his or her turn to test you!

Bangladesh Studies O Level (7094) Pilot Textbook

Topic 2 (c) The establishment and consolidation of Muslim rule in Bengal (1204--1342)



Purpose of this section

This section covers Muslim rule in Bengal from 1204 to 1342. You will learn about:

- Muhammad Bakhtiyar and the Turkish conquest
- the Sufis and the spread of Islam in Bengal.

Summary

In 1204, the first Muslim ruler, Bakhtiyar, a Turk, captured Nadia and established Muslim rule. After his death, the Sultan of Delhi extended his authority into Bengal. However, it was a period of instability and there was in-fighting amongst rivals for the Delhi Sultanate, so the Turkish rulers of Bengal were almost independent. The spread of Islam in Bengal was also enabled by Muslim saints called Sufis.

Muhammad Bakhtiyar Khalji and the Turkish conquest

The political influence of Islam began to spread in Bengal with the conquest of Nadia, the capital city of the Sena ruler Lakshmana, by **Muhammad Bakhtiyar Khalji** in 1204 AD.

Muslim rule in northern India

Bakhtiyar Khalji's arrival in the Bengal frontier was part of the same Turkish advance that saw the expansion of Islam into India. Towards the end of the twelfth century, Muhammad Ghuri had captured Delhi and established Muslim rule in northern India. He was succeeded by his General, Kutubuddin Aibak. During the time of Kutubuddin, Bakhtiyar was granted a small territory near Bihar, from where he started invading surrounding areas. At one point, he thought of capturing Bengal and in 1204 he attacked the Sena capital, Nadia.

The conquest of Nadia in Bengal

Bakhtiyar captured Nadia in a unique way. Sensing the presence of a strong army of Lakshmana Sena on the main route to Nadia, Bakhtiyar proceeded instead through the jungle of Jharkhand. He divided his army into several groups, and he himself led a group of horsemen and advanced towards Nadia in the guise of horse-traders. In this manner,

Bakhtiyar had no problem in entering through the gates of the royal palace. Shortly afterwards, Bakhtiyar's main army also joined him and within a short while Nadia was captured.

Further expansion

After capturing Nadia, Bakhtiyar advanced towards Gauda (Lakhnuti), another capital of the Sena kingdom, conquered it and made it his capital in 1205. Next year, Bakhtiyar set out for an expedition to capture Tibet, but this attempt failed and he had to return to Bengal with poor health and a reduced army. Shortly afterwards, he was killed by one of his commanders, Ali Mardan Khalji.

Internal feud

The death of Bakhtiyar was followed by an internal feud among three of his lieutenants. In the in-fight, **Iwaz Khalji** emerged victorious and he ruled Bengal from 1212 to 1227, at which time he was killed while fighting an army sent out from Delhi by **Sultan Iltutmish**, who wanted to extend his authority on Bengal.

Delhi influence

After the death of Iwaz Khalji until the year 1287, Bengal remained politically unstable. During this period, 15 rulers of Turkish origin ruled Bengal. Some of these rulers were obedient to the Delhi Sultan, but others wanted to get rid of Delhi's influence. As the Delhi Sultans were often fighting amongst themselves for control of the Sultanate, they did not always concentrate on controlling Bengal. So some Turkish rulers ruled Bengal almost independently.

Notable among the rulers of Bengal of this period were **Nasiruddin**, son of Delhi Sultan Iltutmish, **Jalaluddin** and **Tughral Khan**. It was during Tughral Khan's time that **Balban, the Sultan of Delhi**, invaded Bengal following Tughal's declaration of independence from Delhi. Tughral was defeated and Bengal now came firmly under the control of Delhi Sultanate.

Independence from Delhi and expansion

However, after the departure of Balban, his son **Bughra Khan** and grandson **Kaikaus** ruled Bengal virtually independently from Delhi. These two members of the family of Balban ruled Bengal until 1301, when **Shamsuddin Firuz Shah** took over.

Firuz brought about an expansion of Muslim territories second only to the expansion achieved one hundred years earlier by Bakhtiyar Khalji. Before Firuz, the Lakhnauti dominion was confined within Bihar, north and northwestern Bengal, and Lakhnour in southwestern Bengal. Occupation of Satgaon in Hughli and Sonargaon had started in the reign of Kaikaus and

under Firuz the process was completed. He also conquered Mymensingh and Sylhet. Firuz, like his two predecessors, remained virtually independent of Delhi.

Further struggles with Delhi

Firuz Shah died in 1322. His death was followed by a bloody feud among his sons, and the **Sultan of Delhi, Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq**, was forced to send an army under his adopted son **Bahram Khan** (also known as Tatar Khan) to restore Muslim control in Bengal. With Bengal again under control, Delhi Sultan Ghiyasuddin divided Bengal into three administrative units: **Satgaon, Sonargaon and Lakhnauti**, and different officials were appointed for administering these regions.

But control from Delhi did not last long, and the period between 1322 and 1338 was highly volatile. Finally, **Fakhruddin Mubarak Shah**, armour-bearer (*Silhadar*) of Bahram Khan, took control of Sonargaon and proclaimed independence and assumed the title of Sultan. He then defeated forces from **Satgaon and Lakhnauti which had been sent to restore Delhi's control.**

Fakhruddin's achievement was to mark the beginning of a new chapter in the history of Bengal, when there were two centuries of independence from external control.



Figure 2.5 Sonargaon (source: Banglapedia, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh)

The Sufis and the spread of Islam in Bengal

Sufis were Muslim saints who were considered **to possess the blessing of God and spiritual power.** Sufis derive their inspiration from Hazrat Muhammad, who forms the source of **spiritual knowledge and teachings in Islam.** Sufis led a very simple life and preached Islam through their **words and deeds.** When in danger, the Sufi leader (Pir) and his disciples (Murids) took up arms as well. Most Sultans of Bengal tried to keep good relations with the Sufis. In Bengal, the Sufis were numerous and they played a prominent role in delivering the Islamic message of **equality and social justice and thus drew people of different religions towards Islam.**

Sufis arrived in Bengal from the Middle East or Central Asia as early as the time of the arrival of Bakhtiyar Khalji. One of the earliest and most revered Sufis of Bengal was **Shah Jalal** (died 1346), who arrived and settled in Sylhet with his 313 disciples. It is said that his simple life, love of ordinary people of different religions and castes and his Keramati (power of making miracles) attracted the people of Sylhet to Islam.

Other revered Sufis and Pirs include:

Baba Adam Shahid, who selected the Dhaka region as his area of activity sometime in the fourteenth century. He is buried in Munshiganj.

Hazrat Khan Jahan Ali (died 1459), who preached Islam in Khulna and Jessore and settled in Bagerhat. He built the famous shat-gambuj or Sixty-Tomb mosque there.

Hazrat Shah Makhdum (died 1313), who preached and settled in Rajshahi.

Hazrat Bayazid Bostami (died 874) is another famous Sufi whose name is associated with a famous dargah situated on top of a hillock at Nasirabad in Chittagong. Popular belief has it that he visited Chittagong long before the Muslim conquest of Northern Bengal in 1204. This belief is based on the fact that Chittagong was a sea-port where the Arabs came for trade as early as the ninth century.

Wider influence of Sufism

It appears that Sufism not only helped the spread of Islam in Bengal, but it also influenced the local religions. The ideal of Sufism, attaining the love of God through love of His creation, has greatly influenced the devotional doctrines of Vaishnavism as well as the mysticism of the Bauls. At times, Sufism in Bengal has been transformed into a folk religion with many of the Sufis being regarded as saints or folk deities. During a maritime journey, for example, especially if a storm arises, sailors pray to Pir Badar, repeating his name, 'Badar Badar'. The names of different Sufi saints are inscribed on the bodies of buses, trucks, launches, and steamers to ensure safe journeys.

Comprehension questions

1. What was unusual about the way that Bakhtiyar captured Nadia?
2. Why was Firuz an important ruler in Bengal?
3. What arrangements did Ghiyasuddin Tughlag make for the administration of

Bengal?

Make your report

You are a messenger for the Sultan of Delhi in 1204. He has heard that Bakhtiyar has captured Nadia in a very clever way. He likes to hear heroic stories told in a dramatic way and has picked you as his best story teller. He wants you to tell him what happened.

So do a little research and prepare to give your account in the most dramatic way possible!

Bangladesh Studies O Level (7094) Pilot Textbook

Topic 2 (d) The rule of the independent sultans (1338-1538)



Purpose of this section

This section covers the rule of the independent Sultans. You will learn about:

the Ilyas Shahi Dynasty

the Ganesh Dynasty

the Hussain Shahi Dynasty.

Summary

Following the establishment of Fakhruddin as independent Sultan of Sonargaon, Bengal experienced a period when independent Sultans ruled for nearly two centuries. During this time, significant developments took place in the art and culture of Bengal.

Introduction

Fakhruddin (see Topic 2c) had established himself as independent Sultan of Sonargaon and after his death in 1349 was succeeded by his son, **Gazi Shah**. However, more significant events were happening in Lakhnauti, where an army commander, **Ali Mubrak**, seized control and established an independent kingdom. In 1342 he was overthrown and killed by his foster brother, **Haji Ilyas**, who established the Ilyas Shahi Dynasty which ruled Bengal for the next hundred years.

The Ilyas Shahi Dynasty

The King of Bengal?

Haji Ilyas, the founder of the Ilyas Shahi Dynasty, took control of Lakhnauti in 1342 and assumed the long title of **Sultan Shamsuddin Abul Muzaffar Ilyas Shah**. Some historians think that Ilyas was the first ruler who brought the three major geographical units of **Satgaon**, **Sonargaon and Lakhnauti** under a single authority. It is probably because of this that he called himself **Shah-i-Bangala** or the King of Bengal.

Haji Ilyas's rise as an independent ruler in Bengal offended the Sultan in Delhi. **Sultan Firuz Tughluq** invaded Bengal with an enormous army in 1353. Though Firuz had some temporary success, he could not crush Haji Ilyas who continued to rule freely. In fact, he not only succeeded in resisting external threat to his kingdom, but he also extended his authority in **Bihar, Nepal, Orissa and Assam**.

So although Fakhruddin started the process of an independent Bengal in 1338, it was Haji Ilyas who was the real founder.

Continued resistance against Delhi

Haji Ilyas was succeeded by his son, **Sikandar Shah**, who ruled a prosperous and politically stable Bengal for about thirty years and died around 1390. Sultan Firuz of Delhi invaded Bengal again in 1359, but Sikandar, like his father, successfully faced the imperial army of Delhi. After this date, the Sultans of Delhi realised the growing strength of the Sultans of Bengal and they did not try to capture Bengal for quite a long time.

Culture and justice

Sikandar Shah was succeeded by his son, **Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah** (1390--1410). Ghiyasuddin was an able ruler. He exchanged embassies with the Chinese Emperor and maintained correspondences with the famous poet, Hafiz of Iran. He also lavishly patronised several madrasas in Mecca and Medina. Ghiyasuddin was also famous for his respect for law and justice. It is said that he once told the Chief Justice of his kingdom that though he was the Sultan, he was not above the law. Ghiyasuddin was fortunate that during his reign there were no invasions by the Delhi Sultanate and so he had no wars to fight.

The Ganesh Dynasty

Political instability

The death of Ghiyasuddin Azam was followed by political instability. His son, **Saifuddin Hamza Shah**, was murdered by his slave, **Shihabuddin**, who took control but was soon murdered himself. Taking advantage of the confusion, a Brahman noble of Dinanajpur, **Raja Ganesh**, assumed power in Bengal.

Hinduism vs. Islam

Though Raja Ganesh commanded great authority, he could not stay in power for long due to constant pressures from Muslim nobles. He is said to have appointed many Hindus in high posts and persecuted many Sufis. **Sultan Ibrahim Sarki** brought a force from Jainpur and Raja Ganesh was forced to abdicate the kingdom in favour of his son, **Jadu**, who agreed to embrace Islam and was named **Jalaluddin Mohammad Shah**. Jalaluddin (1415--1432) maintained good relations with the religious institutions and personalities of Bengal who had been persecuted during the time of his father.

However, after Ibrahim Sarki left Bengal, Ganesh reassumed power and reconverted his son to Hinduism. Only after Ganesh's death in 1418 did Jalaluddin return to Islam.

Bengali and Persian court languages

During Jalaluddin's reign, Bengali became a court language alongside Persian. A new era of patronisation of Bengali language and culture started and this process received momentum in the era of Hussain Shahi Dynasty that followed.

The return of the Iliyas Shahi Dynasty

Jalaluddin's son, **Shamshuddin Ahmad Shah**, has been described by some historians as a just ruler and by others as oppressive. He was murdered by his slave, **Nasir Khan**, who ascended the throne. This made the nobles outraged and they killed him and restored the Iliyas Shahi Dynasty by installing **Nasiruddin Mahmood Shah**, grandson of Haji Iliyas (1442 AD). He ruled for seventeen years (1433-1459), and during his reign the boundary of Bengal was greatly extended.

Nasiruddin was succeeded by his able son, **Rukhunuddin Barbak Shah** (1459-1574). Ruknuddin had brought a large number of slaves of Ethiopian origin who became politically powerful over the time. Soon after Ruknuddin's death, the activities of some of these 'slaves' created **political instability**. Between 1487 and 1493, **four of the slaves became Sultans and were killed by rivals**. A period of unrest was finally brought to an end when a **noble of Arab origin named Sayid Hussain assumed power (1494) and entitled himself as Alauddin Hussain Shah**. Thus the Hussain Shahi Dynasty was established.

Art and culture during the Iliyas Shahi Dynasty

With the establishment of Iliyas Shahi Dynasty, the initial unrest and political instability were brought to a minimum. Therefore the Sultans could pay more attention to the development of art and culture.

In the field of architecture, the most spectacular achievement was the famous Adina Mosque in Pandua, built by Sikandar Shah in 1375. The mosque was not only larger than the largest mosque of the Delhi Sultans of the time, but it was also the largest mosque in the whole subcontinent of India.

Other important monuments erected during the Iliyas Shahi period were the tomb of Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah at Sonargaon, the Kotwali Darwaza, the Dakhil Darwaza, the Nim Darwaza, the Tantipara mosque, the Kadamrasul Masjid and the Darasbari mosque of Gaur, and the Sona Masjid of Pandua.

Under the patronage of Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah, **Shah Muhammad Sagir** wrote his famous poem, Yusuf-Zulekha. It brought about a revolution in Bengali literature, which was greatly enriched with the addition of **the religious stories of Islam and the introduction of the romantic tale as a new theme for Bengali poets**. Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah asked Krittivas to write the

Ramayana in Bengali. Ruknuddin Barbak Shah extended his patronage to Muslim and Hindu scholars alike. During his reign, Zaynuddin composed the Rasulbijay and Ibrahim Qayum Faruqi composed the Safarnamah. Ruknuddin Barbak Shah equally extended his patronage to Hindu scholars and poets -- during his reign, Raimukuta Brhaspati acquired fame and glory, and Barbak Shah honoured Maladhar Basu, the compiler of the Srikrishnavijay, with the title of 'Gunaraj Khan'.

The Hussain Shahi Dynasty

Extending the boundaries of Bengal

Alauddin Hussain Shah extended the boundaries of Bengal by conquering Kamarupa and Kamta, annexing Comilla and Chittagong to his kingdom and sending expeditions to Orissa. He also repulsed an attack by Sikander Lodi, the Sultan of Delhi. He gave away some of his powers to his son, Prince Nusrat Shah, who was a skilled administrator.

Keeping Bengal safe from Babur, the founder of the Mughal Empire

After the death of Hussain Shah, **Nusrat Shah** (1519--1532) ascended the throne of Bengal. He was an able ruler like his father. Nusrat cleverly tried to avoid any confrontation with Babur, founder of the Mughal Empire, who had appeared in the eastern Indian scene after his victory at Panipath (1526). Nusrat professed neutrality and avoided having any connection with the anti-Mughal confederacy that was formed by Mahmud Lodi with Afghan chiefs. When Babur sent an expedition to Bengal, Nusrat Shah concluded a treaty which made Bengal safe.

Independence of Bengal lost to Sher Shah, Afghan leader

Nusrat Shah was killed by an assassin in 1532 and succeeded by **Alauddin Feruz Shah** and then **Ghiasuddin Mahmud**. But they could not reverse the trend of decline of the Hussain Shahi Dynasty that had started after the death of Nusrat Shah. Meanwhile, the Afghans grew stronger under the leadership of **Sher Shah**, who posed a great threat to the Mughals in Delhi as well as the Sultans of Bengal and when he captured Gaur in 1538, the independent status of Bengal was finally lost.

Art and culture during the Hussain Shahi Dynasty

The Hussain Shahi Dynasty was marked by a long spell of undisturbed peace, prosperity, communal harmony and the development of Bengali culture and literature. This is why the Hussain Shahi era is considered the 'golden age' of the Bengal sultanate.

The rulers of this period took an active interest in the growth of local literature by patronising the major poets of the time. The sultans, because of their close association with the local people, gave status and dignity to the Bangla language which now began to play the role that was earlier played by Sanskrit in the pre-Muslim period. Kavindra Parameshvara and Shrikara

Nandi, the translators of the Mahabharata, were patronised by Paragal Khan and his son Chhuti Khan respectively, both being governors of Chittagong under Hussain Shah. Of the few writers of Vaisnava padas, Yashoraj Khan, served as an official of Husain Shah, while Sheikh Kabir, a Muslim poet, was intimately connected with Nusrat Shah. Shaikh Zahid composed his yogic philosophy Adya Parichaya in 1498-99 AD, one of the earliest specimens of Bangla poems dealing with yogic ideas.

The period also marked the growth of secular elements in Bangla literature. Shridhara, the author of Vidya Sundara, received patronage from Prince Firuz, son of Nusrat Shah.

During the Hussain Shahi period, Bengal's contributions to architecture and calligraphy were significant. Architecture and calligraphy were largely the product of court patronage. The case was probably similar with music, particularly its classical branch which seems to have flourished in the court. The reign of Nusrat Shah witnessed a sudden flowering of pictorial art as is evidenced by the ten folio illustrations of the first part of the Sikandarnamah, known as the Sharafnamah, which details the exploits of Alexander in the East.

By the time the Hussain Shahi rulers came to power, Bengal had already developed a tradition of architecture. The Iliyas Shahi rulers had started a rich architectural tradition with an individuality of its own. Hussain Shahi architecture is a continuation of this earlier tradition. The ruins of the Darasbari Madrassa at Gaur (on the Bangladesh side of the medieval city) exhibit the vigour of the building art in the period. The Gumti gate, the Qadam Rasal, the Jahanian Mosque, the Bara Sona mosque and the Chota Sona mosque show the glorious 'brick style of Bengal' developed in the Hussain Shahi period.

The buildings built outside the capital seem to have followed the plan and design of buildings erected in the metropolis. The Sura mosque and Hemtabad mosque in Dinajpur, the Bagha mosque, the Navaram mosque in Pabna, the Majlis Aulia mosque of Pathrail in Faridpur, the Sankarpasha mosque of Sylhet and the Galdi mosque in Sonargaon are some excellent examples of the period. The Bara Sona mosque and the Chhota Sona mosque have a spirit of ornamentation which most of the earlier structures lack.

In this period, we find a predominance of the stone cutters' art. The architecture of the period clearly reveals local influences and gives expression to Bengal's life and culture. The old Terracotta, which had its revival in the earlier period of Muslim rule, continued under the Hussain Shahi rulers. The local elements, which found expression in the architecture of the period, include the curvature of the cornice and the copy of the chauchala. The Hussain Shahi

artists copied the terracotta art on stones. In its rich ornamentation, the Hussain Shahi style stands in strong contrast with the rather austere style of the previous phase.

Comprehension questions

1. Who was the real founder of an independent Bengal? Why?
2. Why was Raja Ganesh unable to maintain himself in power?
3. How did Nusrat Shah save Bengal from Babur?

Giving a presentation

The above sections on Art and Culture during the Iliyas Dynasty and Art and Culture during the Hussain Shahi Dynasty give many examples of artistic and cultural splendour.

Pick any one example during either period and explain to your class why it is so important (you may prefer to pick a number of examples and explain those). Remember, however, that you will need pictures to demonstrate the significance of your selections.

Specimen exam questions

Part (a)

- . Name one of the six janapadas of Ancient Bengal (1)
- . Which dynasty brought Buddhism to Bengal? (1)
- . Who was the first independent king of Ancient Bengal? (1)
- . Which place did Bakhtiyar capture in 1204? (1)
- . Who was the son of Raja Ganesh who converted to Islam? (1)

Part (b)

- . Write what you know about Bengal under the Guptas (5)
- . Why did the Palas gain control in Bengal and then lose it? (5)

Part (c)

Who contributed more to art and culture in Bengal -- the Iliyas Shai Dynasty or the Hussain Shahi Dynasty? Explain your answer by writing about both dynasties. (10)

Bangladesh Studies O Level (7094) Pilot Textbook

Topic 3 (a) The establishment of the Mughal Empire in India and its expansion into Bengal



Purpose of this chapter

This chapter covers Topic 3 of the five History & Culture Topics in the syllabus for the Cambridge GCE Ordinary Level Bangladesh Studies. It introduces candidates to:

- how the Mughal Empire was established in India, some of the work of the Moghul emperors, and the impact of the Mughal Empire on Bengal (**Topic 3a**)
- the reasons for the decline of the Mughal Empire in India as a whole (**Topic 3b**)
- the impact of the Mughal decline in Bengal and the growth of the Nawabs (**Topic 3c**).

Topic 3a: The establishment of the Mughal Empire in India and its expansion into Bengal

Summary

The Mughals first arrived in India in the early sixteenth century and extended their authority widely. In Bengal they encountered strong opposition from the Afghans, but following a Mughal victory at the Battle of Rajmahal in July 1576, Bengal finally became an integral part of the Mughal Empire.

Maps

Maps and pictures can be found in publications such as:

Ali, Mohar; History of the Muslims of Bengal; Dhaka: Islamic Foundation; 2003

Majumdar, R.C., H.C. Chaudhuri and Kalikinkar Datta; An Advanced History of India; 8th edition; London: Macmillan; 1963

www.sscnet.ucla.edu/southasia/History/Mughals/mughals.html

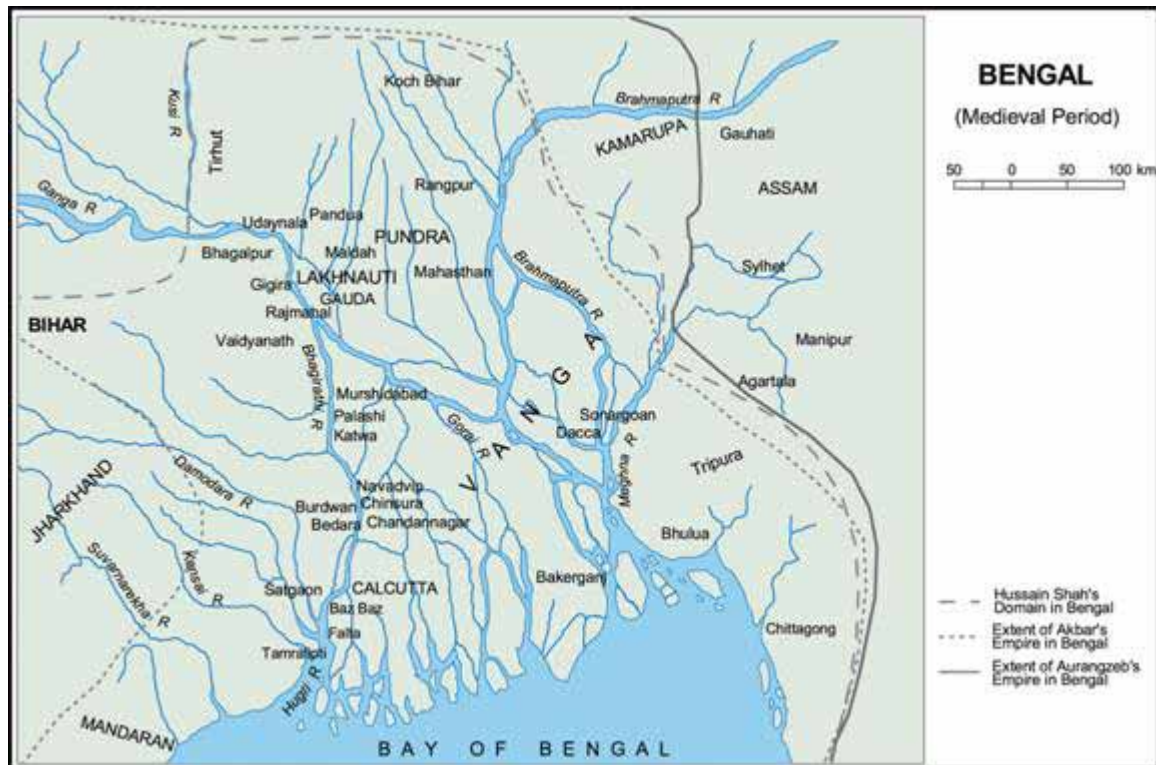


Figure 3.1 Medieval Bengal (source: Banglapedia, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh).

Main events: struggles between Mughals and Afghans

- 1526 **Battle of Panipat:** Moghul Babur defeats Sultan of Delhi
- 1538 **Sack of Gaur:** Afghan rule established in Bengal
- 1539 **Battle of Chausa:** Afghan Sher Shah defeats Mughal Humayun
- 1540 **Battle of Kanauj:** Humayun again defeated and flees to Persia
- 1556 **Mughal Akbar:** assumes power
- 1575 **Afghan Daud Khan:** recovers Bengal
- 1576 **Battle of Rajmahal:** Bengal becomes part of Mughal Empire

The Mughal invasion by Emperor Babur

The rise and the reign of the Mughal dynasty is one of the most interesting episodes in Indian history. At the height of their power, the Mughals ruled almost every corner of India. Bengal was one of these. Bengal came under the influence of the Mughals not only in the field of politics, but also of economy and culture.

Babur: the founder of the Mughal Empire

The founder of the Mughal Empire was **Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur**. Through his father's line, Babur was a descendant of **Amir Taimur** (also known as Timurlane, 1336-1405), and through his mother's line, he was a descendant of **Chengiz Khan**, both of whom were famous warriors of the medieval period.

Babur was born in Central Asia in 1483 into the ruling family of a small kingdom called Fargana. He was a very ambitious man and tried to establish an empire in Central Asia. But he was unsuccessful and instead turned to India to set up his empire.

Taking advantage of a power vacuum in India

The circumstances in India were ideal for Babur's ambitious mind. With the decline of the last strong Sultans of Tughlaq dynasty, central power in Delhi was not strong. Then the invasion of Delhi in 1398 by Timurlane had brought further instability. The Sultans of the Sayyid and Lodi dynasty had tried to maintain the political power of Delhi but faced great difficulties. The Lodis, racially Afghans, had extended their political influence in India considerably, but there was little stability as the Afghan Lodi rulers of different regions often fought with each other for supremacy.

Battle of Panipat

Babur stepped in India amidst this situation. Between 1519 and 1520, he conquered Virat, Sialkot and Saidpur. He conquered Kandahar in 1522 and Punjab in 1525. Then in the battle of Panipat (1526), he defeated **Ibrahim Lodi, Sultan of Delhi**, and began to establish the Mughal dynastic rule in India. The battle of Panipat not only paved the way for Babur's rise to supremacy in northern India, but also in Bengal.

Afghan Resistance to the Mughals in Bengal

Sultan of Bengal wavers between Afghans and Mughals

After the defeat and death of Ibrahim Lodi at Panipat in April 1526, some Lodi leaders were forced to seek refuge with **Nusrat Shah, Sultan of Bengal and Bihar**. Nusrat Shah not only gave them protection but also presented them with privileges and villages according to their ranks and titles. Nusrat Shah is even said to have married Ibrahim Lodi's daughter. It is

believed that In the face of the advance of the Mughals under Babur, Nusrat Shah was seeking to build an alliance with the Afghans.

In 1527, however, Babur sent an envoy to Nusrat Shah (1519-32), asking for his neutrality in the ongoing conflicts between the Mughals and the Afghans. Nusrat Shah kept putting off his reply. In 1528, Babur sent another envoy to Bengal asking for a definite answer from the Sultan. Nusrat Shah could delay no longer. He sent presents to Babur and guaranteed that he would remain neutral during the Mughal's campaign.

In order to pursue the rebellious Afghan Chiefs, Babur asked Nusrat Shah for free passage through the trans-Ghagra territory. When Nusrat Shah hesitated, Babur occupied the territory up to Saran after defeating the Sultan's contingent posted there. **Nusrat Shah's military governor of Monghyr promptly concluded a treaty with Babur accepting all his terms.**

The death of Babur and Nusrat Shah and the emergence of Sher Khan

Shortly after this, Babur died (1530). His death was followed by the assassination of Nusrat Shah (1532). Babur was succeeded by his son **Humayun**, and Nusrat Shah was succeeded by his brother, **Mahmud Shah**. Both of the new leaders were less able than their predecessors, and the next influential figure was **Sher Khan**, an Afghan of insignificant origin. He not only captured Bengal and Bihar but also kept the Mughals away from North India as long as he lived. Therefore Sher Khan can be seen as an important figure not only in the history of Bengal, but also of India.

Comprehension Questions

1. Who was Babur?
2. How did he extend his authority in many parts of India?

Emperor Humayun and the Afghan Resistance

Afgahn Sher Shah topples Mahmud Shah in Bengal

Sher Khan (better known as Sher Shah) came to the limelight when Mahmud Shah sent an army into Bihar to punish one of his governors for his alleged involvement in the assassination of his father, Nusrat Shah. But the governor happened to be an ally of Sher Khan, who in defence of his ally, advanced towards Bengal and captured Gaur in 1538, in course of his fight against Mahmud Shah. Mahmud Shah was forced to concede all territories west of Rajmahal and pay an annual tribute of about one crore tankas (*takas*). Shortly

afterwards, when Mahmud Shah broke his commitment of paying the annual tribute, he was finally toppled by Sher Shah's army. With this, Afghan rule was established in Bengal. But the Mughals were coming.

Sher Shah defeats the great Moghul Humayun

In northern India, after the death of his father, Humayun became the Mughal emperor but soon he sensed great danger to his new empire from the emerging power of Sher Shah. In 1538, Humayun marched towards Bihar and Bengal with a huge army to subdue Sher Shah. Wisely, Sher Shah did not confront Humayun's massive army face to face and 'melted' into the Bihar interior, allowing the Mughals an easy occupation of Bengal. But whilst Humayun was busy merrymaking in Gaur, Sher Khan established his control over the territory between Bihar and the capital Delhi, thus cutting off all the lines of communication between Delhi and Bengal. Humayun had unwisely wasted his time in Bengal when the rainy season was drawing near.

After some time, when Humayun realised his mistake and started for Agra from Bengal, his way was blocked by Sher Shah at Chausa. Sher Shah defeated Humayun in the battle of Chausa, near Boxer, in June 1539. Soon afterwards, Sher Khan sent an army to Gaur and succeeded in overthrowing the Mughal garrison. In the meantime Humayun made another attempt to recover his fortune and confronted the Afghans in Kanauj in May 1540, but was defeated again. Humayun fled to Persia.

Sher Shah and the rule of the Afghans

Administration of Sher Shah

In a brief reign of only five years (1540-1545), Sher Shah established peace and order in the Empire and remodelled its administration. For example:

He divided his Empire into 47 *sarkars* and subdivided each *sarkar* into a number of *parganas*. Bengal had 19 *sarkars*, with two high officials, *Shiqdar-i-Shiqdaran* (Shiqdar-in-Chief) and *Munsif-i-Munsifan* appointed in each *sarkar* to look after the work of *pargana* officers.

Taxes were fixed at one-fourth of the gross produce, after proper measurement of land, and were payable either in cash or in kind.

Sher Shah reformed the currency and improved trade and commerce by abolishing some duties. A network of excellent roads, connecting the capital Agra with outlying areas of the Empire, as well as *sarai*, mosques and temples at regular intervals,

improved communication. His most important road was the *Sarak-i-Azam*, which ran for 3000 miles from Sonargon to Multan via Agra, Delhi and Lahore, with shady trees on both sides. This road came to be known as the Grand Trunk Road in the Colonial period.

He introduced a means of easy and quick despatch of government orders and messages, to and from the capital, by relay of horses. *Sarais*, besides being shelters for traders, travellers and government servants, served as *dak-chowkis* (stations for changing post horses) as well.

The sultan remodelled the police system, made village headmen responsible for the maintenance of peace in their respective areas and prevented crimes like drinking and adultery through *muhtasibs*.

He maintained a strong standing army and an efficient espionage system. A man with a strong sense of justice, the sultan was the highest court of appeal, both for civil and criminal cases. Next to him was the *Qazi-ul-Quzzat*. In the *parganas* the *Qazi* administered criminal cases, while the *Amin* looked after the civil ones. *Panchayets* decided the civil cases of the Hindus.

The sultan made liberal grants for charitable purposes, opened free public kitchens for the poor, founded madrasas, mosques and important buildings, laid out gardens and erected hospitals and *sarais*. His excellent taste in building is well attested by his noble mausoleum at Sasaram. Sher Shah was a pious Muslim, but he also was tolerant towards the Hindus. He combined the qualities of a military leader, a wise monarch and a capable and far-sighted statesman.

Source: adapted from Banglapedia, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh

Comprehension Question

Show how Sher Shah can be considered as a good administrator.

Comprehension Questions

1. Why did Emperor Humayun find it difficult to assert his authority in Bengal?
2. When and how did the Mughals finally take control in Bengal?

Return of the Mughals

The death of Sher Shah in 1545 gave Humayun an opportunity to regain his empire from the Aghans. He finally managed to achieve this by 1555. The return of the Mughals led to a long-lasting Mughal supremacy almost all over India. However, the process of consolidation of the Mughal Empire was carried out not by Humayun, but by his son, Akbar, the greatest of the Mughals. Bengal once again came under the influence of Mughal supremacy during his time.

Akbar and the beginnings of Mughal Rule in Bengal

Akbar ascended the throne of Delhi at the age of thirteen following the death of his father, Emperor Humayun, in January 1556. After assuming power, Akbar had to fight a number of battles in order to consolidate his empire in the north and south of India. Meanwhile, Bengal continued to be under the successors of Sher Shah until 1564, when **Sulaiman Kararni, the Governor of South Bihar**, extended his authority over Bengal. Sulaiman, till his death in AD 1572, formally recognised the overlordship of Akbar and maintained uncomfortable but friendly terms with the Mughal Emperor.

However, on the death of Sulaiman, his son, **Daud Khan**, aroused the wrath of the Mughal emperor by declaring his independence and then attacking and capturing the fort of Zamania, on the Eastern frontier of the Empire. Akbar personally marched against Daud Khan in 1574 and drove him out of **Patna and Hajipur**. He then returned to Delhi, leaving an army of 20,000 to continue confronting the Afghans. However, **Daud Khan was able to strike back and recover Bengal in October 1575**. But when **Daud Khan was killed at the Battle of Rajmahal in July 1576**, Bengal finally became an integral part of the Mughal Empire.

Activity: Writing an obituary

When important people die, newspapers often write an account of their lives. This is called an *obituary*. You are going to write an obituary with a difference. Your obituary is going to be about either Nusrat Shah or Sher Shah. But it is not going to be a fair obituary. You must decide to write it either only to praise your selected ruler or only to criticise him. Once you have written it, compare your account with that written by someone who had the opposite view. Who do you think has written the most accurate account?

Akbar and the Baro Bhuiyans

Anti-Mughal resistance by the Baro Bhuiyans in Bengal

However, Mughal control of Bengal was far from secure at this stage. Between 1574 and 1610, local resistance prevented the Mughals from completing their mission of absolute

control over Bengal. The resistance was put up by a number of powerful chieftains and landlords (*zamindars*) of Bengal, collectively known as the *Baro Bhuiyans* (twelve landlords). Most of the bhuiyans were governors of the now fallen Sultanate of Bengal. The anti-Mughal resistance was led by the famous **Isa Khan**, who had his capital in Sonargaon, close to today's Dhaka.

Mughal forces defeated by Isa Khan

In September 1584, Isa Khan defeated a large Mughal navy. Two years later, when the Mughals successfully marched through the Bengal Delta and reached as far as Chittagong, Isa Khan played a rather conciliatory role and seemed to have accepted Akbar's overlordship. But Isa Khan was increasingly being viewed by the Mughals as a menace to their Empire. Therefore, Akbar sent one of his most charismatic generals, **Raja Mansingh**, to be governor of Bengal. Mansingh led an expedition against Isa Khan in 1595. But in the meantime, Isa Khan became more emboldened by the alliance from neighbouring zamindars such as **Kedar Rai of Faridpur**. In 1597, he defeated the Mughal forces under Mansingh whose son was killed in the battle. Isa Khan's resistance against the Mughals has been reflected in folk songs, ballads and poems.

Musa Khan takes up the struggle against Mughal forces

However, the era of successful resistances against the Mughals declined with the death of Isa Khan in 1599. After the death of Isa Khan, his son **Musa Khan**, took up the leadership of the anti-Mughal resistance. In the meantime, Mansingh was able to defeat and kill Kedar Rai, one of the most influential allies of Musa Khan. Resistance to the Mughals centred around Musa Khan and **Usman Khan**, one of the last very powerful Afghans. These two chieftains continued their struggle against the Mughals with mixed success, but finally they had to give in when **Islam Khan**, an illustrious Mughal governor, was sent to Bengal.

Influence of Jahangir

Mughal governor Islam Khan breaks up control of Musa Khan

Islam Khan's appointment in Bengal followed changes in political circumstances in northern India. In October 1605, Emperor Akbar had died and he was succeeded by his son, Jahangir. Jahangir had sent to Bengal two governors, Qutub al-Dia Khan Koka and Jahangir Quli Khan in quick succession between 1606 and 1608 (1606-07 and 1607-08). It was during these years that the Bengali Chief, Musa Khan, and his allies had recovered some of their territories which had been lost during Mansingh's invasions. Then Jahangir sent Islam Khan to Bengal as the new Mughal Viceroy.

Islam Khan was young and energetic and was determined to establish Mughal authority over Bengal. He brought in increased forces and war materials, including guns and artillery, as well

as a large fleet. A new Diwan, Abu Al Hasan and a new admiral of the fleet, Ihtimam Khan, joined him at Rajmahal shortly after his arrival.

While Islam Khan was preparing for war in 1608, he also tried to induce **Raja Pratapaditya of Jessore**, another influential figure of the Baro Bhuiyans, to join the Mughals by offering territories and patronage. Thus began a new period in the Mughal policy in Bengal. Islam Khan applied diplomacy in winning over as many of the *zamindars* and chiefs as he could to break up the power of Musa Khan and his confederates. Pratapaditya responded favourably to Islam Khan's offers and accepted his overlordship, but eventually refrained from supplying his army to assist the Mughals, though he promised to do so. As a result, Islam Khan defeated and imprisoned Pratapaditya and annexed his territory.

Mughal control established over Bengal

After crushing Pratapaditya, Islam Khan fought against many minor Afghan leaders before finally defeating Musa Khan in 1611 and Usman Khan in 1612. Musa Khan was compelled to come to a compromise with the mighty Mughals, but Usman Khan died fighting the Mughals. With the submission of Musa Khan and death of Usman Khan, the period of resistance of the Baro Bhuiyans came to an end. With this, most of Bengal also came firmly under Mughal administration. The most important event of the time was that Dhaka was made the capital of Bengal. This was named **Jahangir Nagar**, in honour of the Mughal emperor.

The Baro Bhuiyans of Bengal: A Note

Abul Fazal and Mirza Nathan claimed the Bhuiyans to be twelve in number. It should be mentioned, however, that the Baro Bhuiyans during the time of Akbar were not the same as those in the time of Emperor Jahangir, his son. Parganas also changed hands. During the reign of Akbar, Chand Rai and Kedar Rai were *zamindars* of Bikrampur and Sripur but in the reign of Jahangir, these Parganas were in the hands of Musa Khan. The families of Chand Rai and Kedar Rai were probably extinct.

According to the Akbarnama, the Bhuiyans were:

(i) Isa Khan Masnad-i-Ala, (ii) Ibrahim Nazal, (iii) Karimdad Musazai, (iv) Majlis Dilwar, (v) Majlis Pratap, (vi) Kedar Rai, (vii) Sher Khan, (viii) Bhadur Ghazi, (ix) Tila Ghazi, (x) Chand Ghazi, (xi) Sultan Ghazi, (xii) Selim Ghazi, (xiii) Qasim Ghazi.

In the Baharistan-i- Ghaibi, the names of Musa Khan and his 12 zamindar allies are as follows:

(i) Musa Khan Masnad-i-Ala, (ii) Ataul Khan, (iii) Abdullah Khan, (iv) Mahmud Khan, (v) Bahadur Ghazi, (vi) Sona Ghazi, (vii) Anwar Ghazi, (viii) Shaikh Pir, (ix) Mirza Mimin, (x) Madhav Rai, (xi) Binode Rai, (xii) Pahlwan, (xiii) Haji Shamsuddin Bagdadi.

Actually they were thirteen including the leader.

Adapted from Banglapedia (Asiatic Society of Bangladesh)

Comprehension Questions

1. Who were the Baro Bhuiyans? (There is no need to give their individual names, just describe who they were).
2. Give some examples of their successes.
3. Why were they eventually defeated?

Influence of Shah Jahan

Emperor Jahangir died in 1627 and was succeeded by his third son, Prince Khurram or **Shah Jahan**. Shah Jahan's reign of thirty years till 1658 was marked by peace and prosperity. For the province of Bengal, too, as a part of the Empire, it brought security of life and property, especially in lower Bengal. Hugli was captured from the Portuguese and the slave trade closed.

The Viceroys of Bengal during Shah Jahan's reign

Qasim Khan was sent to replace **Fida Khan** as Viceroy of Bengal. The next two viceroys, **Azam Khan** (1632-35) and **Islam Khan Mashadi** (1635-39) had to deal with fresh trouble in Assam and Arakan. The Mughals occupied Darrang in Assam and set up headquarters in Gauhati. In 1639, Islam Khan Mashadi was recalled to take up the post of Prime Minister, and so **Prince Suja**, the second son of Shah Jahan was appointed Viceroy of Bengal.

Prince Suja as Viceroy of Bengal

Prince Suja's appointment was clear evidence of the importance given to the frontier province by the Emperor. Bengal enjoyed a long period of peace and prosperity during Suja's viceroyalty of twenty-one years (1639-1660).

Rajmahal: the new capital

Suja removed the headquarters from Dhaka to Rajmahal, which was a drier region near the Bihar frontier. It also enabled effective control over all parts of the province, including Kamrup in the northeast.

Influence of Aurangzeb

Emperor Shah Jahan fell seriously ill at the end of September 1657. This was a signal for a struggle of succession to break out among his four sons, **Dara Shiko, Suja, Aurangzeb, and Murad.**

Aurangzeb wins struggle for succession amongst his brother Suja

Suja had proved himself an efficient administrator as Viceroy of Bengal. However, he had hardly any influence in court. Murad, the youngest son, did not have the qualities needed either. The main contest, therefore, was between Dara, the eldest son, and Aurangzeb. **Dara was defeated by Aurangzeb at Samugar, eight miles east of Agra on the 29 May, 1658.** Dara fled and Aurangzeb occupied Agra and, as his brother Dara had done, imprisoned his father in the Agra fort. He also imprisoned his brother Murad..

The armies of **Aurangzeb** and **Suja** confronted each other at Khajwa, in modern Uttar Pradesh (north India). **A defeated Suja fled towards Bengal in January 1659. Aurangzeb sent the Governor of Khandesh, Moazzam Khan alias Mir Jumla in pursuit of Suja. He then returned to the capital and had Dara imprisoned and beheaded.**

In the meantime, Suja took refuge in Tanda near Gaur. Mir Jumla occupied Rajmahal in April 1659 and defeated Suja early in 1660. Suja fled to Dhaka with his family and finally sought asylum in Arakan. **Mir Jumla made a triumphant entry into Dhaka in May 1660.** The Arakan ruler had Suja and his family members mercilessly killed, probably when he attempted a coup with the help of the Muslim subjects of the Arakan ruler.

1. Why do historians see the reign of Shah Jahan as successful?
2. Can you find any examples of Aurangzeb's determination to make himself undisputed ruler?

Mir Jumla as new Viceroy of Bengal: capital transferred to Dhaka

Suja's escape to Arakan ended the war of succession. Aurangzeb wanted Mir Jumla to continue to remain in Bengal. He wanted to reward Mir Jumla for his services by giving him

the viceroyalty and also to establish his authority firmly over Bengal. Mir Jumla was awarded the title of Khan-e-Khanan, the highest of all ranks in recognition of his achievement.

Mir Jumla transferred the capital from Rajmahal to Dhaka. During his viceroyalty, he occupied Kuch Bihar and succeeded in annexing the greater part of Assam. Orissa, which had been joined to the Bengal administration during Prince Suja's time, was also under his administration until a new Governor of Orissa was appointed. When Mir Jumla died, Daud Khan was made the temporary governor until Shaista Khan, Mumtaz Mahal's brother, arrived as the new Viceroy of Bengal.

Shaista Khan as Viceroy: reforms and Chittagong



Figure 3.2 Shaista Khan (source: Banglapedia, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh).

Shaista Khan arrived in Dhaka in December, 1664. He introduced a number of reforms such as the abolition of trade monopolies and customs and tolls.

Kuch Bihar remained under Shaista Khan's control, and he planned to capture Chittagong from the Arakanese. At first, his forces occupied Sandvip. Then after defeating the Arakanese in a battle in 1666, he entered Chittagong. Many Bengali men and women, held prisoner by the Arakanese, were set free. Chittagong was named Islamabad by the Emperor.

Murshid Quli as Viceroy: more independent

Murshid Quli Zafar Khan was made **Viceroy of Bengal in 1705**. He proved to be a strong and capable ruler. He transferred the capital from **Dhaka to Murshidabad**. It was during Murshid Quli's time that, Bengal's political connection with central Mughal administration weakened. Murshid Quli did not openly sever the connections with the Mughals, but he was wise enough to realise that the great Mughal Empire was gradually becoming weak. He therefore asserted his authority in a way that would not trouble the emperor but would help him run the affairs of Bengal virtually independently. This trend of ruling Bengal independently from central Mughal administration was adopted by rulers of Bengal until the British took over. But why was the hitherto very successful Mughal Empire beginning to weaken?

The decline of the Empire after Aurangzeb

Aurangzeb, the last great Mughal Emperor, had reached the height of his power in the year 1690. His rule extended **from Kabul to Chittagong and from Kashmir to the river Kaveri**. Then, gradually, this great Empire began to disintegrate even before **Aurangzeb's death in March 1707**, though the pace was accelerated soon after his death. One of the reasons was the struggle for succession between his three sons. But there were many other reasons, which we will read about in the next section.

Comprehension Question

How true is it to say that Bengal was independent from the Mughal leaders under the Viceroyalty of Murshid Quli?

Activity: A Historical Debate

One of the most interesting things about history is that whilst we can often agree about what happened, often we can't agree about why or how important an event is. You are now going to take part in a debate about the Baro Bhuiyans. You have to prepare a speech supporting one of the views below and then try to persuade the rest of your classmates that you are right.

A. The Baro Bhuiyans were great heroes of Bengal. They showed the Mughals how powerful Bengal was.

B. The Baro Bhuiyans were wasting their time. The Mughals were too powerful and were bound to defeat them in the end.

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Topic 3 (b) Reasons for the decline of the Mughal Empire



Purpose of this section

This section covers the reasons for the decline of the Mughal Empire, including:

succession disputes and factions

weak control and policies - towards religion, the Deccan, the Rajputs and the Marathas

administrative weaknesses

military problems

Persian invasions

the arrival of the British.

Summary

By 1576, Bengal had become part of a mighty Mughal Empire whose achievements impressed all who came into contact with it. However, within 150 years, the Empire was in decline as internal weaknesses and external threats brought an end to the Mughal supremacy.

Activity

Show on three different maps of Bengal the extension of the Mughal rule in the province during the reigns of Jahangir, Shahjahan, and Aurangzeb.

Main events

1620 British get permission from Emperor Jahangir to conduct trade.

1678 Mughal Aurangzeb annexes Marwar and angers Rajputs.

1679 Jizia reimposed.

1686/7 Annexation of Golconda and Bijapur angers Marathas

1688 British blockade Bombay and Mughal ports

1690 British sign treaty.

1700 Founding of Fort William by British.

1707 Death of Aurangzeb: war of succession.

1739 Persian Nader Shah plunders Delhi.

There were many reasons for the decline of the Mughal Empire, beginning with succession disputes and ending with the arrival of the British, who took advantage of the lack of central control, the discontent and factionalism. Some of the specific reasons were:

1. Struggle for succession

After the death of Aurangzeb, a war of succession broke out among his three sons, **Muazzam** (Governor of Kabul), **Muhammad Azam** (Governor of Gujrat) and **Muhammad Kam Baksh** (Governor of Bijapur). In his will, Aurangzeb had directed his sons to divide the Empire peacefully among them. But at his death, there rose a bitter struggle for the throne of Delhi.

The competition for power led to the death of Azam and Muhammad. **Muazzem** took up the title of **Bahadur Shah** (also Shah Alam I) but when he died in February 1712, a fresh war of succession broke out among Muazzam's four sons. Three out of his four sons were killed in this conflict. The remaining son, **Jahandar Shah**, became the emperor. But soon, **Farrukhsiyar**, a son of one of the defeated princes, deposed Jahandar Shah to avenge his father's death. A series of such conflicts arising out of battles for succession, resulting in the absence of a long-lasting central authority, weakened the Mughal Empire.

2. Religious policy

Aurangzeb was brave and untiring in carrying out his duties. He was also a great soldier and general but he failed to be a good ruler because of his religious conservatism. He appeared to be an emperor of the Muslims only, not of all the people of India who had different religious and cultural identities. In 1679, he re-imposed the Jizia on the non-believers. He denounced the idea of joining hands with the Hindus for the integrity of the Empire. He rather focused on the Muslims only. He also banned sati, the Hindu sacrifice of widows. These and other of his religious policies insulted the non-Muslims and caused discontent and unrest.

Sourcework

Source A

"Aurangzeb keeps the fast on Fridays and during the period of Ramadan. He does not eat forbidden meats, does not listen to music or wear forbidden clothes. In his court, no wicked talk, no backbiting or lying is allowed".

This is an extract from *The History of Aurangzeb* written by an official in his court in 1668.

What does this source make you think about Aurangzeb?

Source B

Aurangzeb says 'My kingdom is now full of mosques instead of the most hideous temples. Instead of poisonous inns and brothels we find groups of holy men.' But despite what Aurangzeb says in his kingdom every day the most monstrous crimes in the world are committed.

This was written by an Italian who visited India during Aurangzeb's reign and wrote a book called *The History of the Mughals*.

Do you agree that Source B makes you think about Aurangzeb in a different way from Source A? Explain your answer.

As the two sources were written around the same time, why do you think they say different things about the emperor?

3. Aurangzeb's Deccan policy

Aurangzeb's determination to crush the Marathas was also responsible for the decline of the Empire. The Emperor went to the Deccan to annex Golconda in 1686 and Bijapur in 1687.

These two states were not only Shia states but also supportive to the Marathas by providing employment and even military training. A friendly policy towards these two states could have made them his allies against the Maratha.

But Aurangzeb could not see this possibility. The Mughal Empire, by this time, had become too vast to be controlled efficiently by a centralised administration, especially Karnataka. Communication and transport were poor and the frequent Maratha raids made it difficult for the nobles to collect the taxes. This was a serious setback to the prestige of the Empire.

4. Aurangzeb's Rajput policy

Aurangzeb did not attach enough importance to the Rajput alliance. In December 1678, he introduced a change of policy towards the Rajputs who had contributed much to the growth of the Mughal Empire in India. When he annexed Marwar, Aurangzeb's aggressive policy drove the Rajputs to gather forces and the Rajput War turned into almost a national uprising. The war continued till Bahadur Shah I, Aurangzeb's son and successor, recognized Ajit Singh as the Rana of Marwar in 1709.

5. Maratha revival

By 1691, the Marathas (under the Peshwas) had become strong enough to rise up in rebellion under Raja Ram and other Maratha chiefs. They consolidated their positions in western India, dreaming of a greater Maharashtra Empire. The Marathas grew into the strongest power in northern India and took up the role of defenders of Hindustan against foreign invaders like Ahmed Shah Abdali. The Maratha conquests in the north accelerated the disintegration of the Empire.

Research Task

Write what you know about Durga Das and his rescue of Ajit Singh and the Ranis.

Comprehension Questions

1. Why did Aurangzeb attack the Deccan?
2. Why were the Marathas a threat to Aurangzeb?

6. The weak nobles and party factions

The weak characters of the nobility hastened the downfall of the Mughal Empire. The nobility were only interested in increasing their power and influence. The country was often broken

apart by civil wars due to the quarrelsome nobles. The nobility was divided into two broad factions:

The *Hindustani or Indo-Muslim party*, who were the Afghan nobles, the Sayyids of Barha and Khan-i-Dawran whose ancestors had come to India from Badakhshan. These Indian Muslims were mostly aligned with the Hindus.

The *foreign nobles* were called Mughals as a whole but were divided into two groups. Those who came from Trans-oxania and other parts of Central Asia were mostly Sunni (The Turrani Party). The Irani nobles who were from Persia were mostly Shias.

During the reign of Bahadur Shah and Jahandar Shah, the Irani party was in power with Zulfikhar Khan as leader. But from the time of Farrukhsiyar's reign, the Hindustani party, together with the Turrani group, took over power. At the end, the Turrani and the Irani joined together against the Hindustanis. This factionalism grew stronger in the absence of a strong emperor.

7. Administrative weaknesses

Corrupt administration

The Mughal administration became full of corruption even before the death of Aurangzeb. Officers of all ranks took bribes. On the other hand, the high rate of taxation ruined the people who lost interest in production. In the reign of Shah Jahan, the state demand had been raised to half of the produce. His immense expenditure on the construction of numerous buildings worsened the condition of the finances. The tyrannical administration of the provincial governors brought further misery to the people who could go nowhere for redress.

The Mansabdari system

A *mansab* meant an official appointment of rank and profit, which was held by every officer of the state. They were bound theoretically to supply a number of troops for the military service of the state. The *mansabdars* were the official nobility of the country. They were directly recruited, promoted and suspended by the Emperor himself. The *mansabdari* system later deteriorated, therefore, with the ascendancy of weak rulers on the throne and as corruption and repression increased.

Condition of the people

The people of India suffered greatly. The land revenue taxes increased from the time of Akbar. The nobles were mistreated and cheated out of their land rights. In response, they often broke official regulations and behaved cruelly. People's miseries increased after Aurangzeb's death and peasants often left their lands in despair.

The discontent of the peasants was an added reason for the uprisings of the Satnanis, the Jats and the Sikhs. Many peasants formed bands of robbers and adventurers weakening law and order further.

8. The demoralised Mughal army

The condition of the army was deplorable. The immense wealth of India and the wine and comforts they enjoyed demoralised the Mughal army and led to its deterioration. The Mughal army was so weak that even after three attempts it failed to capture Kandahar. In 1739, Nader Shah, the Persian invader, easily plundered Delhi and carried out a wholesale massacre. The people lost all respect for the Mughal sovereign.

Misuse of revenue by the nobles

The Mughal army was formed of contingents maintained by the great nobles from the revenues or assignments of their posts. With the weakening of the central control, the nobles used those assignments to benefit themselves.

Lax discipline

Discipline became lax in the army. There was no regular punishment for military crimes. Aurangzeb often ignored acts of treason and cowardice, and even neglect of duty. There was no drill in the army and each soldier trained as he wished with his weapons.

Outdated weapons

The weapons and methods of warfare had become outdated by this time. They depended mostly on artillery and the armour-clad cavalry. The artillery was local and followed by a huge camp of various people of different ages, combatants, and non-combatants, and numerous elephants, cattle and beasts of burden. In the eighteenth century, musketry was already introduced in other armies, and the Maratha cavalry with their swiftness and suddenness could easily bring disorder in the Mughal camps.

Not a national army

The Mughal army comprised various elements of people who fought battles in their individual ways. With the expansion of the Empire, the army became too huge and uncontrollable. Moreover, the jealousies and rivalries of the high-ranking officials in the army often destroyed the chances of victory during the campaigns.

9. The Persian's invasions of Ahmed Shah Abdali

The invasions of Ahmed Shah Abdali, the invader from Persia and the son of Nadir Shah, hastened the downfall of the Mughal Empire. These frequent invasions revealed the weakness of the Empire and brought chaos and confusion. The third battle of Panipat in 1761, fought between Ahmed Shah Abdali and the Marathas, ended in a disastrous defeat for

the Marathas. It also weakened the Marathas and the Muslim rulers, paving the way for the British Rule in India.

Research Task

Research and write brief notes on the third Battle of Panipat.

10. The arrival of the British

The British

There is sometimes a little confusion about what we mean by the term 'British', especially as Great Britain today includes England, Wales and Scotland, and the UK includes Great Britain and Northern Ireland! However, for the period of history that we are looking at, the best definition of British is 'from Britain', which meant England, Scotland, Wales or Ireland. Although the king or queen ruled all these lands, each of them had its own language. However, the language spoken by most people, and the official language, was English.

The Mughals neglected the navy and this proved to be a disaster. The coastline was left unprotected and the Europeans were able to establish themselves in India with little difficulty. Various European nations who had established trade relations with India, seeing the weakness of the Mughal Empire, began to focus more on political influence than trade in India.

Through diplomacy, military skill and persistence, the **English East India Company** emerged as successful in exploiting the volatile circumstances in India in general and Bengal in particular. They first succeeded in getting permission **from emperor Jahangir to build forts and conduct trade in Surat, Agra and Ahmedabad around 1620**. But given the prevailing trend of decline in the Mughal Empire, particularly towards the end of Aurangzeb's reign, they gradually became politically ambitious.

In 1688, the British blockaded the Bombay and Mughal ports and captured many Mughal ships. **As the Mughal Emperor responded strongly, they were forced to sign a treaty in 1690. The company was given a license for trade only on condition that the captured vessels would be returned and a payment of one and a half lacs of rupees made.** Though this treaty apparently restrained the British, this was not good for the Mughal Empire in the long run. The reason is that this treaty legitimised the presence of the British, as well their right to do business in India. From this time onwards, **the British organised their strength in** Bombay,

Madras and Bengal and tried to help build up an alliance that was not sympathetic to the Mughals.

The arrival of the British was to prove fatal to the Mughal Empire. Britain was the most technologically advanced country in the world and the British brought with them weapons far in advance of those used by the Mughals. The British also brought a unity and sense of determination which the divided Mughals lacked.

Comprehension Questions

1. What is the difference between the 'British' and the 'English'?
2. Why could it be said to be a mistake for Aurangzeb to make a treaty with the British in 1690?

Task: Analysing Causes

In this chapter, ten causes are listed to explain the decline of the Mughal Empire.

1. Divide the causes into those which can be seen as 'internal weaknesses' and those which can be seen as 'external threats'.
2. Summarise each reason in just one sentence.
3. Do you think that any one of these reasons is more important than the others? Explain your answer.

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Topic 3 (c) The decline of the Mughals in Bengal and the growth of the Nawabs



Purpose of this section

This section covers the reasons for the decline of the Mughal Empire, including:

- succession disputes and factions
- weak control and policies - towards religion, the Deccan, the Rajputs and the Marathas
- administrative weaknesses
- military problems
- Persian invasions
- the arrival of the British.

Summary

As in the rest of India, Mughal power also declined in Bengal. From the beginning of the eighteenth century, the Nawabs of Bengal ruled almost independently until the defeat of Sirajuddaula at the famous Battle of Palashi in 1757. That victory for the British marked the beginning of their period of dominance in India.

Main events

1695 Afghan Rahim Khan challenges Mughal rule in Bengal.

1713 Nawabs of Bengal era started by Murshid Quli Khan's hereditary position.

1725 Nawab Suja-ud-din.

1739 Nawab Sarafraz Khan.

1740 Nawab Alivardi Khan.

1756 Nawab Siraj-ud-doula.

1757 Battle of Palashi: Siraj defeated by the British.

1757 Nawab Mir-Jafar.

The Impact of the Mughal decline

Mughal rule in Bengal was at its greatest height during the Viceroyalty of **Shaista Khan** (1664-1688). The end of Shaista Khan's rule, however, marked the beginning of the end of the Mughals in Bengal. A number of Mughal governors were sent to deal with problems in Bengal, but they could not stop the overwhelming decline that set in all around.

Afghan challenge to Mughal rule in Bengal

The Afghans had never accepted their defeat at Mughal hands. Taking advantage of the Emperor's continuous absence from the capital during his Deccan campaigns, **Rahim Khan**, an Afghan Chief, attempted to regain power in Orissa and south-west Bengal around 1695. The uprising was put down severely but it was the first serious challenge to Mughal rule in Bengal from within the Empire since the time of Emperor Jahangir.

Europeans take advantage

Taking advantage of the confusion, the European companies fortified their settlements and made themselves militarily stronger in west Bengal. **In 1690, the British were allowed to build settlements in Calcutta once again.** Eight years later, they bought the zamindaris of the three villages of **Sutanoti, Kalikata and Gobindopur.** These three villages gradually became the centre of activities of the English and came to be known as Calcutta. It is from Calcutta (Kalikata) that the English East India Company gradually grew into a military and political power, which would one day rule the whole of India. **Fort William** was built by the English, **Fort Orleans at Chandernagar** by the French, and **Fort Gustavas at Chinsura** by the Dutch. To increase their armies, the Europeans enlisted Rajputs and other local bands.

Mughal authority in Bengal weakens

In the meantime, the continual tension between the Mughal Viceroy, **Prince Azim al-Din** and the provincial Diwan, **Murshid Quli Khan**, further weakened Mughal authority in Bengal. Murshid Quli Khan (Kartalib Khan) persuaded the Emperor to order the transfer of the capital of Bengal from Dhaka to Murshidabad. As the Viceroy's residence was moved to Patna, Dhaka was no longer the real capital of Muslim Bengal and was soon in decline.

Regional independence of Bengal under the Nawabs

The influence of the Diwan, Murshid Quli Khan, began to increase. The Mughal Viceroy was mostly away from Bengal and in 1707, Aurangzeb died. The Emperor's death was followed by a succession of wars in Delhi. It was not long before the Diwan, Murshid Quli Khan, took over the powers of both the **Diwan and the Nazim** (Subhadhar) – explained below. Thus another period, though very short-lived, of independence from northern Indian imperial rule ensued in Bengal.

Changes in administration, politics and society

The term 'Nawabs of Bengal' refers to the hereditary rulers of Bengal whose only connection with the Mughal Emperor was to follow his **Firman and to pay a tribute to him regularly**. The Nawabs were responsible for their subah (province or provinces). The Nawabi era in Bengal was started by Murshid Quli Khan.

Towards the later part of the Mughal rule in the Indian Subcontinent, the central government appointed two officers, who enjoyed equal political status but were independent of each other, **to administer a subah. One of them was the *subahdar or nazim* (general administrator including justice and defence) and the other was the *diwan* (revenue administrator).**

Since 1705, during the reign of Aurangzeb, Murshid Quli Khan had been a diwan of Bengal. However, it was only in 1713 that the Emperor appointed Murshid Quli Khan as the *diwan* as well as the *subahdar* of Bengal. From Murshid Quli Khan's time onwards, the *subahdari* was no longer an office under the central government but a hereditary office with a *masnad* (throne).

After this, all the successors (*Nawabs*) to the *masnad of Bengal* regarded themselves as independent Nawabs, though they always received the *sanad* (vice regal patent) from the emperor on payment. The decline of the Mughal Empire after the death of Aurangzeb further alienated the provinces from the central government. Taking advantage of this situation, the Nawabs of Bengal strengthened their position and continued to rule independently. On the other hand, bereft of real power, the Emperors had to remain content with gifts and tributes that the Nawabs used to send regularly. Even though the Nawabs could not issue a Firman which was the prerogative of the monarch alone, they could issue *parwanas*, *dastaks* etc. They could even refuse to accept a Firman, as done by Murshid Quli Khan in 1717 when Emperor Farukh Sheyyar issued a Firman granting special trading privileges to the English traders in Bengal.

Comprehension Questions

1. Why did the death of Shaista Khan mark a turning point in the Mughal's rule in Bengal?
2. Which Firman did Murshid Quli Khan ignore in 1717? Why?

Who were the Nawabs of Bengal?

Murshid Quli Khan (1706-1725), the first of the Nawabs, became the Subahdar of Bengal in 1717; he reigned over Bengal, Bihar and Orissa from his capital Murshidabad with only a nominal allegiance to the Mughal Emperor. He also opened a mint and introduced the "*Zurbe Murshidabad*" coin. Murshid Quli Khan built the magnificent [Katra Masjid](#). After his death in 1725, he was buried below the steps of the Katra Masjid.



Murshid Quli Zafar Khan (source: Banglapedia, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh)

Suja-ud-din (1725-1739), alias Suja Khan, son-in-law of Murshid Quli Khan succeeded after Murshid Quli Khan's death. Shuja Khan was a charitable, just and impartial ruler, and gave

great encouragement to learning. He was also a patron of art and culture. After his death in 1739, he was buried in Roshni Bagh (*garden of lights*) near Farah Bagh.

Sarafraz Khan (1739-1740) was a man of valour and of religious temperament. His short career ended in 1740 only after 13 months of reign when he was defeated at the battle of Giria in April 1740 by Alivardi Khan.



Sarafraz Khan (source: Banglapedia, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh)

Alivardi Khan (1740-1756) became the Nawab by defeating and killing Sarfaraz in 1740 and ruled for 16 years thereafter. Though an efficient ruler, he had to face continual attacks by the Maratha and rebellion by the Afghans. He had to buy peace from the Maratha by allowing concessions. He maintained good relationships with the Europeans but did not allow them to increase their military power.



Alivardi Khan (source: Banglapedia, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh)

Siraj-ud-doula ('**Siraj**') (1756-57) succeeded his grandfather Alivardi. The young Sultan faced the two-pronged trouble of the ambitions of the increasingly powerful British and the intrigue of his disgruntled relatives and bureaucrats. In May 1756, Siraj occupied the Cossimbazar factory of the British. Then he went on to occupy Calcutta in June 1756. But then he had to go to Purnea, Bihar to put down the rebellion of his cousin Shaukat Jang, a claimant to the throne. Taking advantage of this situation, the British amassed forces and re-conquered Calcutta in February 1757 and then struck a secret treaty with Mir Jafar. The British captured the French factory at Chandernagore. The French sought asylum from the Nawab. The Nawab and the British army, under Robert Clive, met for the final round at [Palashi](#). In an act of great betrayal by Mir Jafar, Siraj was defeated and killed on 23 June 1757. Mir Jafar ascended the throne of Bengal at the mercy of the British.



Siraj (source: Banglapedia, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh)

Mir-Jafar (1757-1760) was an incompetent ruler. The British replaced him with his son-in-law, Mir-Qasim, in 1760 on account of non-payment of dues. Mir-Qasim paid the dues off but started to show signs of independence. He shifted his capital to Monghyr in Bihar and tried to reorganise his own army. The British did not approve of this and defeated Mir-Qasim in the Battle of Buxar in 1764.



Mir-Jafar (source: Banglapedia, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh)

Key changes from Murshid Quli Khan to Siraj-ud-doula

After Murshid Quli Khan's death, the masnad passed on to his son-in-law Suja-ud-din Khan. It was during his reign that Bihar was incorporated into the province of Bengal. The able Alivardi Khan (Mirza Muhammad Ali) was appointed to the office of administrator of Bihar. After Suja-ud-din Khan's death in 1739, his son Sarafraz Khan ascended the throne. However, Sarafraz Khan was unfit for the post he had assumed and, as a result, Alivardi Khan, Jagat Sheth, Alamchand and his own brother Haji Ahmed conspired against him. Ultimately, in 1740, Alivardi Khan subjugated the Nawab in the Battle of Ghiria near Rajmahal and became the Nawab of Bihar, Orissa and Bengal. Alivardi Khan was a tactful governor, always keen to do best for his province.

It was during this time that **Nadir Shah**, the Persian king, invaded India and threw the Mughal Empire into chaos and turmoil. As a result, the Nawab of Bengal, taking advantage of the situation, strengthened his position and continued to enjoy ruling his subah as an independent ruler. It was due to his efforts that peace was established with the Marathas. Alivardi Khan

also took a strong but cautious stand against the British traders. However, in 1756, this great Nawab died and was succeeded by his grandson Mirza Muhammad Siraj-ud-doula.

Assignment: supporting statements with evidence

'Alivardi Khan was a tactful governor, always solicitous for the welfare of his province.'

Prepare a report on Alivardi Khan supporting the above statement with evidence.

Conspiracy against Siraj-ud-doula

Siraj ruled for little over one year (April 1756 to June 1757) and the Masnad of Bengal was full of thorns for him. During his short lived-administration the young Nawab faced enemies from within the family as well as outside.

Siraj's nomination to the Nawabship caused the jealousy and enmity of Ghaseti Begum (eldest sister of Siraj's mother), Raja Rajballabh, Mir Jafar Ali Khan and Shawkat Jang (Siraj's cousin). Ghaseti Begum possessed huge wealth, which was the source of her influence and strength. Apprehending serious opposition from her, Siraj seized her wealth from Motijheel Palace and placed her in confinement. The Nawab also made certain changes in high government positions giving them to his own favorites. Mir Mardan was appointed Bakshi (Paymaster of the army) in place of Mir Jafar. Mohanlal was elevated to the post of peshkar of his Dewan Khana and he exercised great influence in the administration. Eventually Siraj suppressed Shawkat Jang, governor of Purnia, who was killed in a clash.

The accession of Siraj threatened the position of the dominant section of the ruling group in Murshidabad, which was engaged in accumulation of wealth during the time of the earlier Nawabs. With his assuming the reins of government, this group apprehended that he would be a danger to their continuous enjoyment of the sources of accumulation of wealth, as he was trying to raise another group to counterpoise the old one which usurped the power of the Nawab to a great extent. Siraj's accession was a threat to the British also because he made it absolutely clear that, unlike the previous Nawabs, he would not put up with the abuse of dastaks (permit for trade) by the British and their illegal private trade. The threat came at a crucial time when the private trade of the Company's servants was facing a severe crisis.

Adapted from Banglapedia, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh

Task: Using sources

1. How does the above passage show that there was internal dissension in the

Nawab's own camp?

2. Pick out two statements that clearly reveal the cause of the conspiracy.
3. Identify the different groups who were against the Nawab.

Conflict with the British

Upon ascending the *masnad*, Siraj's main aim was to curb the growing power of the British traders (namely the East India Company) in Bengal. He was already aware of the fact that the only threat to the independent *subah* of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa was the East India Company.

In fact, Siraj had genuine grievances against the East India Company. He accused the company of strengthening the fortification of Fort William in Calcutta without his permission; he also accused them of misusing the trade privileges given to them by the Mughals, thereby causing heavy losses in the revenue of the province. Moreover, under the pretext of trade, they were interfering in the internal politics of the province since Siraj felt sure that the English were heavily involved in the conspiracy against him.

The British also gave shelter to his officers like Krisnadas, son of Rajballav, who appropriated government funds. Also, the British governor, Roger Drake, did not pay the Nawab any *nazrana or peshkash* as was the custom of the day. In spite of all this, the Nawab was willing to forgive the British if they would take appropriate steps against his complaints and agree to continue to trade in the same way as the other traders did.

However, the British had no intention of showing any respect to the Nawab and therefore, when the Nawab expressed a wish to visit their factory in Kasimbazar, Governor Drake insulted the Nawab's special envoy. This incensed the Nawab, who now decided to retaliate. The very first thing he did was to capture the factory in Kasimbazar, march to Calcutta, drive the British out and capture the city. This attack led to the so-called controversial *Black Hole Incident*.

Following these actions of the Nawab, the **Treaty of Alinagar** was signed between the British and the Nawab by which Siraj agreed to compensate for the British losses at Calcutta. But the British could not forget this incident easily and there were only two possible courses open to them. One was to ask the Nawab to forgive them and the other was to avenge the defeat by

force. The British decided to opt for the latter course and under the pretext of a peace treaty prepared for war.

They used diplomacy to reduce French influence in Bengal and at the same time launched an elaborate and intricate plan to replace the Nawab with their own favourite. With this end in view, they courted the friendship and help of Mir Jafar and other disaffected courtiers. When everything was fixed, the company's forces under Robert Clive and Charles Watson marched towards Murshidabad to face the young Nawab. As you will read in the next chapter, Siraj was defeated in the Battle of Palashi.

Research Activity: different points of view

'The Black Hole of Calcutta' is a famous event in the British account of the history of India.

- A. Find out what the British say happened in this event.
- B. Find out what Indian historians say happened in this event.
- C. The British account is obviously exaggerated. Can you think of any reasons why the British might want to do this?

Specimen exam questions

These are the types of questions which you could be asked about the Mughal Period in the exam. Can you answer them?

Part (a)

- . Who was the founder of the Mughal Empire? (1)
- . Where did Sher Shan defeat Humayun in June 1539 (1)
- . Following which battle did Bengal finally become an integral part of the Mughal Empire? (1)
- . Which Mughal emperor died in 1707? (1)
- . At which battle was Sirajuddaula killed? (1)

Part (b)

. Write what you know about the Bar Bhuiyans (5)

. Why were they eventually defeated? (5)

Part (c)

Which of the following was the most important reason for the decline of the Mughal Empire?

. corrupt administration

. the poor Mughal army

. the arrival of the British

Explain your answer by writing about all three alternatives. (10)

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Topic 4 (a) The arrival of the British

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Purpose of this chapter

This chapter covers Topic 4 of the five History & Culture Topics in the syllabus for the Cambridge GCE Ordinary Level Bangladesh Studies. It explains:

- how and why the British came to the subcontinent and how they expanded their authority in the region in the eighteenth century (**Topic 4a**)
- resistance to the British and the effectiveness and consequences of such opposition (**Topic 4b**)
- how British control was consolidated, but finally lost, in the first half of the twentieth century (**Topic 4c**).

Topic 4a: The arrival of the British

Summary

The British first arrived in the subcontinent as traders in the shape of the British East India Company (EIC). The EIC established itself as a dominant European power by a mixture of military victories and alliances with local princes. British rule brought benefits to Bengal, but it also brought enormous suffering.

Background: The East India Company and reasons for British involvement in the subcontinent

Timeline showing the main events in the history of the East India Company

1600	Company formed
1615	Diplomatic agreement between Sir Thomas Roe and Mughal Emperor Jahangir
1633	Foothold in Bengal.
1670	King Charles II granted the company a series of Charters.
1757	Battle of Palashi
1769-70	The Great Famine
1784	India Act: British government takes control
1793	The Permanent Settlement Act

Foundation of the British East India Company

The British East India Company (EIC) was founded in December 1600 as The Governor and Company of Merchants of London Trading into the East Indies by a group of businessmen, who obtained the Crown's charter from Queen Elizabeth I for exclusive permission to trade in the East Indies for a period of fifteen years.

Attention shifts from East Indies to India

The Company initially had 125 shareholders, and a capital of £72,000. At first it made little impression on the Dutch control of the spice trade and could not establish a lasting outpost in the East Indies (modern-day Indonesia and Malaysia).

Eventually, ships belonging to the EIC arrived in India, docking at Surat, which was established as a trade transit point in 1608.

Establishment of the first factory in India

By 1610, the company built its first factory in the town of Machilipatnam in the Coromandel Coast in the Bay of Bengal. The high profits (some as high as 200%) reported by the Company after landing in India, initially prompted King James I to grant subsidiary licenses to other trading companies in Britain, such as the Scottish East India Company. But, in 1609, he renewed the charter given to the Company for an indefinite period, but warned that poor profits would lead to the cancellation of the charter.

Forward base for China

The trading posts in the subcontinent were also used as forward bases for trade into China. In 1611, the Company established a trading post in Canton (Guangzhou), China, to trade tea in return for silver.

Agreements with Mughal Emperor Jahangir

The Company traders were frequently engaged in hostilities with the Dutch, as they competed for the rich spice trade. The company asked the British government to open diplomatic relations with the Mughal Empire so as to have an ally against the Dutch. James I sent **Sir Thomas Roe** to the court of the Mughal Emperor, **Jahangir**, and he gained for the British the right to establish a factory at Surat. In return, the Company offered to provide European goods to the Imperial Court. Gradually the EIC flourished under the good graces of the Mughal Empire, trading in silk, indigo, cotton and saltpetre.

Trade in Bengal

In 1633, the East India Company set foot in Bengal by establishing a factory at Hariharpur on the Mahanadi delta. On 2 February, the English obtained a Farman from Emperor **Shahjahan** permitting them to pursue trade and commerce in Bengal. The most important privilege was obtained from the Bengal governor, **Shah Suja**, who permitted the English to carry out trade in Bengal without any customs duties, in lieu of an annual lump sum of just Rs. 3000.

It was this unique privilege which would take the company to the political domination of Bengal in course of time. In 1668, a new factory was opened at Dhaka, the capital of Bengal. The founding of Calcutta by **Job Charnock** in 1690 completed the process of factory settlement and began the process of establishing political dominance by the company in Bengal. The rebellion of Shobha Singh in 1696 offered the company an opportunity to obtain permission to fortify the Calcutta settlement and thus arrange its own defence.

Charters of Charles II strengthen the powers of the Company

The Company profited from the restoration of the monarchy in the Britain in the form of King Charles II.

The British acquired the port of Bombay from Portugal, which came as the dowry of Catherine de Braganza when she married Charles II. (Surat had gradually lost importance as a trading centre, to be replaced by Bombay.)

King Charles II also granted the company rights to allow it to own territory, establish its own coinage, build forts, establish an army and form alliances.

The Company, often surrounded by hostile powers, needed protection. The freedom to manage its own military affairs was welcome indeed. The Company rapidly raised its own armed forces, or sepoys, in the 1680s, mainly drawn from the local population.

By 1689, the Company's influence had grown so that it had three main bases, Bengal, Madras and Bombay, which it called 'presidencies', and a substantial military force to protect them.

The next step was to extend the Company's influence by purchasing the zamindari of Calcutta, Sutanuti and Govindapur, thus increasing the Company's power.

Merger with rival company

In 1698, a rival company to the EIC was formed, called the General Society Trading to the East Indies, but the two rival 'East India Companies' were amalgamated in 1702 with a new charter and a new name - 'The United Company of Merchants of England Trading to the East Indies', though the popular name 'East India Company' remained until the last days of the company.

Comprehension Questions

1. Why did the British first come to India?
2. How did the East India Company establish its presence in the Indian subcontinent?

Research Task

Find out more about Job Charnock. Is he really the founder of Calcutta?

Events leading up to British annexation of the sub-continent

Struggles with France over control of India

In 1756, the European powers went to war in the Seven Years War. The British and French fought in the subcontinent. The war began badly for the British in India. The French, under their commander **Dupleix**, managed to win some important victories. But then the tide turned under the EIC General, **Robert Clive**. The Treaty of Paris in 1763 relegated the French to small enclaves in **Pondicherry, Mahe, and Chandernagar**.

British take advantage of collapse of Mughal Empire

The war with France had seen the triumph of the Company army that was now needed more than ever due to the collapse of the Mughal Empire.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, the collapse of the Mughals had led to independent states being set up all over the subcontinent. The **Marathas, the Sikhs and the Nizam of Hyderabad were a few of the numerous groups that aimed to expand their kingdoms**. These war-mongering states, though creating problems for the British territories, also gave them a chance to increase their territorial acquisitions.

British use of internal divisions in Bengal

The Nawab of Bengal, **Sirajuddaula**, was the grandson of Nawab Alivardi Khan. He sided with the French against the British. However, he faced local opposition from disgruntled relatives and bureaucrats, as explained at the end of Chapter 3. **The British exploited this opposition against the Nawab and used every opportunity to weaken his position.**

Conflict between the Nawab and the British



Sirajuddaula (source: Banglapedia, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh)

There were many factors that brought Sirajuddaula into direct conflict with the British – these are mentioned at the end of Chapter 3. Briefly, these factors are:

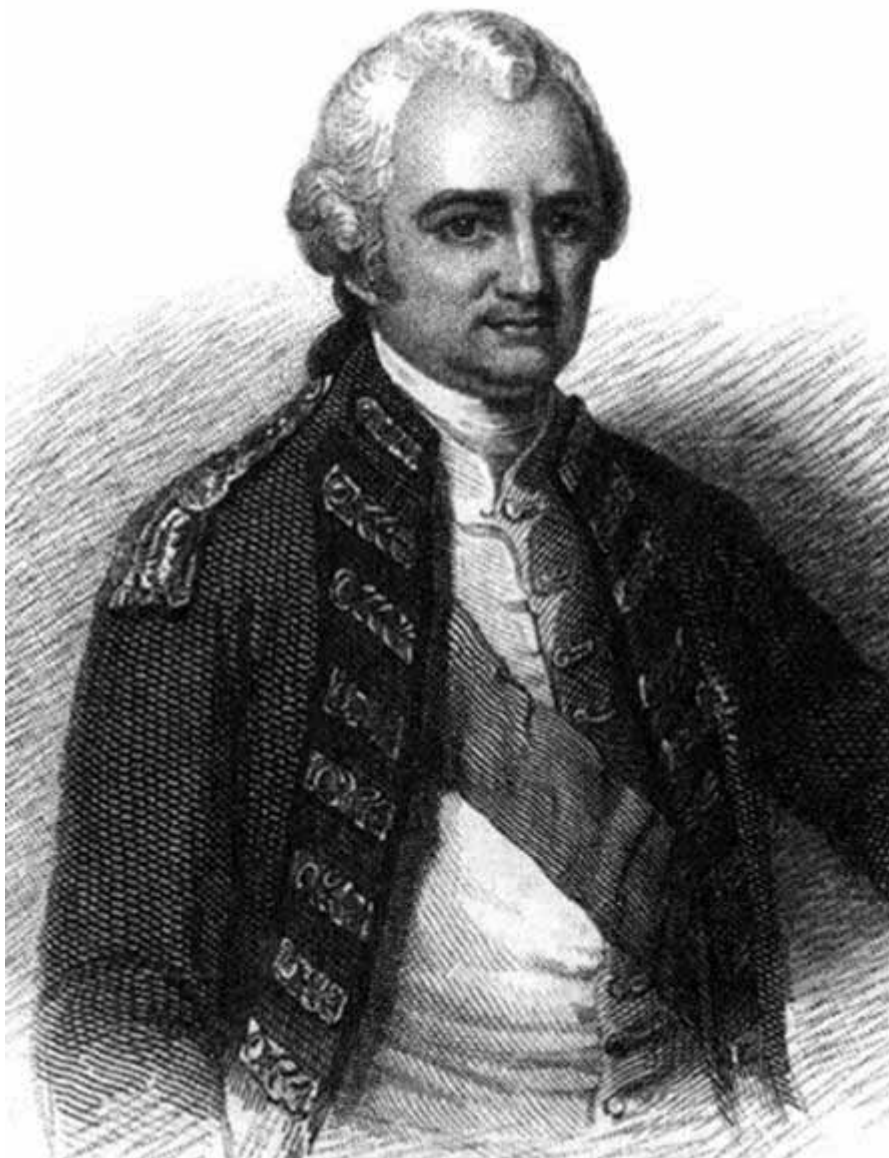
Firstly, the British were **misusing certain trade privileges in Bengal**, which were given to them earlier. This irritated Sirajuddaula, and he demanded stricter trade practices from the British, which made relationships deteriorate.

Secondly, the father of Sirajuddaula, Alivardi Khan, had not permitted the British to **fortify their settlements in Bengal**. However, in anticipation of the breaking out of the Seven Years' War, the British and the French began to fortify their settlements in Bengal

without the Nawab's permission. The Nawab became irritated at this and ordered them to demolish their fortifications. The French carried out his order, but the British did not pay any heed to it.

Lastly, the British lack of respect enraged Sirajuddaula. The British refused to hand over one of Sirajuddaula's officers, Krishnadas, whom they were protecting. They also insulted one of the Nawab's special envoy to Fort William. This prompted Sirajuddaula to attack Calcutta and take control of the city. He had the moral support of the French to do this. He renamed the city Alinagar after the name of his grandfather.

The British retaliated. Soon, reinforcements came from Madras under the command of Robert Clive. Clive recaptured Calcutta (2 January 1757) and stormed the port of Hoogli in reprisal. He came to a secret agreement with the Murshidabad Darbar faction, who opposed the young Nawab. Mir-Jafar, the recently dismissed Bakhshi of the Nawab, was chosen to be the next Nawab of Bengal. Then Clive's forces met those of Sirajuddaula at Palashi on 23 June 1757.



Robert Clive (source: Banglapedia, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh)

The Battle of Palashi

The battle started at about eight in the morning. Mir Mardan, Mohanlal, Khwaja Abdul Hadi Khan, Naba Singh Hazari and a few others put up a brave resistance, while others under Mir-Jafar, Yar Latif and Ray Durlabh Ram avoided any serious involvement. The British had not expected even this much resistance and it was reported that at one point Clive had thought of retreating. However, around three in the afternoon, things took a turn for the better for the British when Mir Mardan was struck by a cannon ball and killed.

Siraj then sought the help of Mir-Jafar, who advised the Nawab to suspend action for the day in order to renew his efforts the next day. This message was also relayed to Clive who, upon finding the Nawab's men in retreat, launched a fresh assault on them. This ultimately led to a

general rout. The battle was over **by five in** the afternoon with Clive marching towards Sirajuddaula's **capital city, Murshidabad.**

Thus, the unfortunate Nawab with his huge army was completely defeated by the British. Until the end, he tried his utmost to retaliate against the British with the help of the French and his loyal subjects. But even in this he failed and was later brutally murdered. The Nawab's body was found in a river after the battle. With his death ended the rule of the last independent Nawab of Bengal.

For a map showing the positions of the English and the Nawab's army at the field of Palashi and more information on the battle see:

<http://murshidabad.nic.in/plassey.htm>

Consolidation of British economic and political power in Bengal

The EIC strengthened its position by installing **Mir-Jafar** as the puppet Nawab in Murshidabad, thus removing French influence in Bengal. The 24 Parganas were obtained from the new Nawab as a gift to the company immediately after Palashi.

Dual administration

In 1760, three large and resourceful districts of Bengal (**Burdwan, Midnapur and Chittagong**) were acquired. The revenue administration of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa was acquired in 1765. From 1765 to 1772, the company shared revenues from Bengal but took no responsibility in administering it. This system came to be known as **'dual administration'**.

Wider control than Bengal

The Battle at Palashi gave the British control of not only the province of Bengal but also the whole of Sirajuddaulah's empire that encompassed the regions of Bihar and Orissa. This was legitimised when the figurehead Mughal Emperor gave the British complete administrative rights to the conquered provinces. Thus was the beginning of British rule in India established.

The battle of Palashi is considered as one of the most significant battles in the history of the subcontinent. It decided not only the fate of Bengal but the whole subcontinent (Bangladesh, India and Pakistan) for the next two hundred years.

Rule by the East Indian Company in Bengal

After the battle of Palashi, the East India Company ruled Bengal through a series of puppet rulers, such as Mir-Jafar. The Diwani Treaty, negotiated by Clive in 1765, allowed the region to be governed by collaborators including Mir-Jafar and Mir-Kaseem in return for surplus revenues which were channeled to the company. The company made huge profits by

operating a monopoly on trade, and company merchants became accustomed to receiving personal 'gifts' which increased their wealth.

Comprehension Questions

1. Explain why Sirajuddaula took up arms against the English.
2. What happened at Palashi in 1757?
3. Why is the Battle of Palashi so important in the history of Bengal?

Sourcework Exercise

Source A

*Such a scene of anarchy, confusion, bribery and corruption
Was never seen or heard of in any country but Bengal*

This is what Robert Clive said.

Source B

No civilised government ever existed on the face of the earth which was more corrupt or more greedy than the government of the East India Company from 1764 to 1784.

This is what a British Member of Parliament said in a debate in the British parliament.

1. What do these two sources tell you about the British at the time?
2. Do they tell you anything about the people of Bengal at the time?
3. Why do you think the British government did not stop what was happening in Bengal?

Great Famine of 1769-70

Whilst the British made huge profits in Bengal, the local people suffered. The consequence was the rapid decline of agriculture and manufacturing and, finally, the great famine of 1769-70, which destroyed one third of the total population of Bengal.

EIC forced to provide good government

Two-thirds of Bengal's productive land became uncultivated due to lack of cultivating manpower. This calamity finally forced the British government to act. In 1773, it passed an Act of Parliament which required the EIC to provide good government to stop this anarchy.

British government takes direct control

Then in 1784, the British government passed the India Act and took direct control of the Indian possessions. It appointed a Governor-General, who would have control of the three presidencies. There would also be provincial governors and a Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces. The EIC continued to trade, but lost most of its administrative powers. Robert Clive's opponents in Britain carried out an investigation into his behaviour in India. Although he was not found guilty of the charge of 'plundering India', the disgrace, coupled with his addiction to opium, caused him to take his own life in 1773.

Research Task: Robert Clive – From Hero to Disgrace

Robert Clive is one of the more colourful British figures in the history of Bengal. Although he was the hero who won the battle of Palashi, he ended up taking his own life.

Research his life and work to explain why he killed himself in 1773.

The Permanent Settlement of 1793

Lord Cornwallis had been Governor-General of India since 1786. His most notable reform was the introduction of Permanent Settlement in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. Under this system, the method of taxation was reformed.

Problems with tax collection

Previously, the right to collect taxes was given to the highest bidder. As a result, the poor were often harassed as the bidder wanted to make maximum money out of the business. The government sometimes suffered, too, when bidders could not pay the Government. As a result of this unsatisfactory system, the Government, the zamindars and the peasants suffered a lot.

Sympathy with landowners

Lord Cornwallis belonged to the landed aristocracy of England. It was only natural for him to sympathise with the landowners. In England, the landed aristocracy were the hereditary owners of the soil and it was in their interests to improve the land. Cornwallis wanted a similar system in Bengal, so he made a ten year settlement with the zamindars in 1789, which was later converted into the Permanent Settlement in 1793.

Role of the Permanent Settlement

The main features of the Permanent Settlement were that the zamindars who had so long been mere collectors of revenue were made the permanent owners of the land, subject to the payment of a fixed sum to the British. The British received a fixed share of the total collection - about 10/11th of the zamindars' collection in 1793. The zamindars were given security of ownership as long as there was no non-payment of revenue.

Impact of the Permanent Settlement

There is no doubt that the Permanent Settlement secured the financial interest of the East India Company and gave stability to its administration. It also helped Bengal to become the most flourishing and the wealthiest province in India. The zamindars became rich and spent money for educational and cultural progress. Moreover, the Permanent Settlement also created a body of zamindars in Bengal who were loyal to the Government.

However, the system had some fundamental flaws:

Firstly, the areas of the zamindari estate were unknown, and the areas of rent-free grants and maintenance, the areas of pasturelands and waste lands were not identified, when the settlement was declared permanent. This led to endless confusion and litigation.

Secondly, though the position of zamindars was improved, the interests of the peasants were not considered. They were helpless against their new landlords. Moreover, the expectation of Cornwallis that the zamindars would improve the lot of their subjects and develop their estates did not come true. As there was fear of losing their lands, the zamindars did not pay attention to its improvement.

The peasants also did nothing to improve the land, as they had no rights in the land.

The British administration received a fixed share of the revenue, but as time went they had to introduce various taxes to keep up with the rising expenses.

The Permanent Settlement was undoubtedly a success for the British Empire. It strengthened the administration and took power away from the masses. It created an aristocracy who, although they would later help in the independence struggle, at that moment preferred to support their white overlords, and most importantly paved the way for another 150 years of British rule in India.

Comprehension Questions

1. Why did the British introduce the Permanent Settlement?
2. In what ways was it different to what had been before?

Discussion/Reflection Question

Do you think the Permanent Settlement was a good thing or a bad thing for Bengal?
Give evidence to support both sides of the argument.

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Topic 4 (b) Opposition to the British

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Purpose of this section

This section explains resistance to the British in Bengal and the effectiveness and consequences of such opposition.

Summary

The British in Bengal were not unopposed. After the Great Famine of 1769-70, the Fakir Sanyasi Movement caused serious disruption to British rule, as did the forces of Titu Meer and the Faraizi Movement, led by Haji Shariatullah. However, the greatest threat came with the war of independence in 1857, though British historians tend to dismiss this uprising as no more than a troublesome revolt.

Resistance to the British

Fakir-Sanyasi Movement

British ban collection of alms

The famine of 1769-70 was just one of the consequences of EIC rule of Bengal. Another was a disruption of the way of life of religious people like the Muslim *fakirs* and Hindu *sanyasis*. Both these groups lived on alms provided by their followers. The EIC administrators, who had little understanding of the religious practices in Bengal, saw the alms collection as illegal impositions on the village people. So they banned the collection of alms by fakirs and sanyasis. In response, a resistance movement was started. The group quickly won support from the peasants, who were already suffering under the new land revenue policy and the calamity of the famine.

The resistance movement

The Fakir-Sanyasi resistance movement was planned and led by **Majnu Shah**, a Muslim Sufi saint of the Madaria sect.

Bhabani Pathak, a Bhojpuri Brahmin, formed a common alliance with Majnu Shah and also led the Sanyasi rebels. They targeted those zamindars loyal to the British and undertook a guerilla style of warfare, often making surprise attacks on company personnel. The rebels were fed information by villages who often told them about the movement of the company troops.

The number of fakirs and sanyasis rose to around fifty thousand or more in the 1770s, and on those occasions when they took part in open warfare with the EIC they could put as many as 6000 troops into the field.

Since the rebels were very mobile, compared to the British army, and were able to seek shelter in inhospitable terrain when threatened, the EIC found it difficult to defeat them. On the few occasions that the British caught them in the open, they were defeated thoroughly, but due to their mobility, they were always able to retreat and regroup in jungles and along the border with Nepal. The EIC army soon found that stationing an army at one site could not stop the guerilla raids from being conducted at another place. From 1767 to 1786, the rebels carried out numerous attacks on EIC bases in places such as Rangpur, Rajshahi, Kuch Bihar, Jalpaiguri, Comilla and Dhaka.

Decline of the Movement The raids would have continued indefinitely but on 8 December 1786, the Fakir-Sanyasis were unfortunate enough to engage in a pitched battle with a British army. The casualties were enormous and the rebels lost almost all of their personnel. The impetus of the rebellion was finally broken. Scattered raids took place until 1812. But after the death of Majnu Shah, the movement gradually lost its direction. By the late 1790s, the rebel attacks had come to an end and all parts of Bengal came under firm British control.

Comprehension Questions

1. What were the causes of the Fakir Sanyasi Movement?
2. Why did it decline?

Titu Meer

Concern for Muslims and peasants

Another serious, but more localised and short-lived rebellion was that of **Titu Meer**. He was a Muslim religious leader who aimed to improve the position of Islam in Bengal. He was worried that Muslims were losing their faith under the rule of the British. But he was also disturbed by the inhumane way the indigo planters and the zamindars treated the cultivators. His ideas brought him into conflict with several Hindu zamindars.

Army formed

To give protection to the exploited peasants, Titu Meer formed a makeshift army and trained it in the use of *lathi* and other indigenous arms. His disciple and nephew **Ghulam Masum** was made commander of the force.

Zamindars involve British in fight against Titu Meer

The increasing strength of Titu Meer's forces alarmed the zamindars, who attempted to take a united stand and to involve the English in their fight against him. However, a force led by Davis, was defeated by Titu Meer and the zamindar of Gobra-govindpur was killed in a conflict with Titu Meer. Alexander, the collector of Barasat, advanced against Titu with the daroga of Bashirhat but also sustained a severe defeat. At this time, Titu Meer filed a complaint to the East India Company against the oppression by the zamindars, but to no effect.

Titu Meer declares war against British

Titu Meer built a strong fort with bamboo poles at Narkelbaria in October 1831, recruited mujahids and gave them military training. The number of Mujahids rose to nearly five thousand. Having completed his military preparation, Titu Meer declared himself a king and urged the people to participate in a war against the British. He soon established his control over the districts of 24 Parganas, Nadia and Faridpur. Titu Meer demanded tax from the zamindars of Taki and Gobardanga who turned to the British for protection. They sent forces but they, too, were defeated.

Defeat for Titu Meer

As a result, **Lord William Bentinck** sent a regular army against Titu Meer under **Lieutenant Colonel Stewart**, consisting of 100 cavalry, 300 native infantry and artillery with two cannons. These forces attacked the rebels on 14 November 1831, who were forced to take shelter inside a bamboo fort. The English opened fire and totally destroyed the fort. There were heavy casualties on the side of the rebels. Titu Meer, along with many of his followers, fell in the battle (19 November 1831). 350 rebels, including their commander Ghulam Masum, were captured. Ghulam Masum was sentenced to death and other 140 captives were sentenced to imprisonment.

Activity: Making a Speech

You have been asked to make a speech at a conference on 'Great Leaders from Bengal's Past'. Your chosen leader is Titu Meer. You have just 90 seconds to make your points. What would you say?

Faraizi Movement

Muslim resistance to zamindars and European cultivators

A different kind of resistance movement was the Faraizi Movement. This was also set up to protect the peasants from the exploitation of the zamindars and European indigo cultivators

and also to remove what were considered to be Hindu practices which had crept into Muslim worship. The movement was started by **Haji Shariatullah**. What was unique about his faction was that it did not resort to the violent methods used by other opponents of the British such as Titu Meer.



Haji Shariatullah (source: Banglapedia, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh)

Refusal to pay taxes and to observe bans

The Faraizi movement spread rapidly in the districts of Dhaka, Faridpur, Bakerganj, Mymensingh, Tippera (Comilla), Chittagong and Noakhali, as well as to the province of Assam. The movement gained the greatest momentum in those places where the Muslim peasantry was depressed under the oppressive domination of Hindu zamindars and European indigo planters.

Shariatullah objected to this exploitation and directed his followers not to pay illegal taxes charged by the landlords. The landlords had even imposed a ban on the slaughter of cows, especially on the occasion of Eid-ul Azha. The Faraizis ordered their peasant followers not to

adhere to such a ban. All these contributed to strained relations between the Faraizis and the landlords who were mostly Hindus.

Campaign against Shariatullah

The offended landlords launched a propaganda campaign with the British officials. They accused Shariatullah of attempting to set up a kingdom of his own like that of Titu Meer. They also brought numerous lawsuits against the Faraizis in which they gained the active co-operation of the European indigo planters. Shariatullah was more than once in the custody of the police for allegedly causing agrarian disturbances in Faridpur. In 1831, the landlords of Dhaka secured the expulsion of Shariatullah from Nayabari, where he had set up his propaganda centre.

Shariatullah died in 1840, but his work was carried on by his son, **Dudu Miyan**.

Through continuous hostility with the Hindu landlords and European indigo planters, the movement gradually developed into a socio-economic programme. He organised the peasantry against the oppressive landlords and declared a jihad against the British government. In retaliation, the landlords and indigo planters tried to contain Dudu Miyan by bringing false cases against him and the British arrested him and put him in prison.

After his death in 1860, the Faraizi Movement continued to influence agrarian life in eastern Bengal as late as early 1880s, under the leadership of **Noa Miyan**, Dudu Miyan's son, but the movement lacked the spirit of earlier years.

Importance of the movement

The Faraizi Movement was important for a number of reasons:

It encouraged the Muslims at a time when they were demoralised by the oppression they suffered from Hindus and the British.

It brought about spiritual revival, which led to a revival in Islam in East Bengal.

It also had an important political and economic impact. The Bengal peasants became united in their opposition to the harsh treatment they received. They also became more aware of their rights and a political unity began to develop amongst them.

Activity: Assessing Importance

Which of the four points made about the importance of the Faraizi Movement do you

think is the most important? Explain your answer.

The war of Independence of 1857

Causes of the war

The basic causes of uprising embraced all aspects of the impact of British rule on Indian society.

Political

Ever since the Battle of Palashi, the territorial power of the EIC Company had been growing very fast and the Indian States began to feel the weight of it. By 1818, when the last Peshwa was dethroned, practically all the Indian States had either been annexed or had entered into treaty with the company on humiliating conditions.

In 1852, **Governor-General Dalhousie** introduced the *Doctrine of Lapse*. This said that when a ruler died without a natural heir, his territory would become British. Not surprisingly, this was very unpopular, especially as the British often used it as an excuse to take land. For example, in 1856 the Nawab of Oudh died. He had several legal heirs, but the British still took the land. So no Indian prince felt secure and there was widespread resentment.

The administrative reforms of **Cornwallis**, introduced at the close of the 18th century, meant the virtual exclusion of Indians, specially the Muslims, from high posts. The English believed that the Muslims were upset at the loss of their empire and could not be trusted. So they were not put in any important posts of the State.

The mistreatment of the Mughal emperor was another cause of unrest. By 1857, the emperor had little power, but was an important symbolic figure. The British decision to move the royal family from the Red Fort of Delhi to the more obscure Qutub Sahib was seen as being disrespectful.

Economic

The land-holding classes became resentful towards the agrarian policy of the EIC. Many landowners were deprived of their lands as they failed to establish their rights by documentary proof. Zamindars and talukdars had lost their ancestral lands as well as social status.

The grievances of the land-holding classes were further aggravated by the excessive taxation which ruined both landlords and peasants. British merchants made huge profits from their

trade in goods such as textiles and prevented local traders from having access to much of this business.

Religious and social

In the 18th century the British showed a friendly attitude towards Indian society and religions. But as British political control grew, so did the spread of British culture. Many British considered it their duty to spread their 'superior' culture and in 1835 one British administrator said '*a single shelf of English books is worth more than the whole of the naïve literature of India and Arabia*'.

Comprehension Question

What do you think the British administrator was trying to say?

Most British were more thoughtful than this, but in general the British did treat the local population as inferior. They did not mix as social equals and this arrogant attitude, coupled with the introduction of a new way of life with the railway, the telegraph and the English system of education, also roused deep suspicion in the minds of the Indians.

Many Indians feared that Islam, Hinduism and Sikhism were under threat from British rule. In missionary schools Christianity was taught and locals who worked for the missionaries were expected to give up their religion and follow Christian teaching. In the 19th century missionary activity increased and missionaries were to be seen everywhere - in bazaars, hospitals, schools and even prisons. The abolition of *Satidaha* and the introduction of widow remarriage added to the peoples' fears that their ancestral faith and caste were not safe in the hands of the British.

Military

The princes lived in an atmosphere of insecurity, the landed aristocracy had been alienated and the mass of the people was dissatisfied. But their discontent might not have led to revolution so long as the Sepoy Army remained loyal. The Sepoys of the Bengal Army were mostly from Oudh and the North-Western Province. They had fought with devotion in the most difficult circumstances and won many wars for the Company. In spite of this, they did not get a fair deal. Their salaries were very low in comparison with those of the British soldiers and they had little chance of promotion. They had also grievances regarding the payment of extra allowances for service in newly conquered territories like Sindh, which were foreign lands to them.

While the country was thus seething with discontent and the Sepoys, too, were agitated, the affair of the 'greased cartridge' came up. It was the immediate cause of the rising of 1857. In January 1857, a rumour went round in Calcutta that the new cartridges to be used in the Enfield Rifle were greased with the fat of cows and pigs and that this had been done to defile both the Hindu and Muslim Sepoys who would use the cartridges. The news soon spread to all the military stations. This roused a storm of indignation and kindled the embers of discontent. The introduction of the cartridges hastened the revolt, which had long been brewing.

Activity: Showing history in a visual way

The above passage divides the causes of the War of Independence under four headings. It then gives different points under those headings. Identify those points and find a way to organise the points as headings on a chart which sums up the causes of the war, using as few words as possible.

Events of the war

Rebellion spreads to region of Bangladesh

The war started at Barrackpur under the leadership of **Mangal Pandey** on 29 March 1857 and soon spread to Meerut, Delhi and other parts of India.

It created serious tension throughout the region of what is now Bangladesh. The resistance in Chittagong and Dhaka and skirmishes at Sylhet, Jessore, Rangpur, Pabna and Dinajpur had left the region in a state of alert and excitement. On 18 November 1857, the Native Infantry of Chittagong rose in open rebellion and released all prisoners from the jail. They seized arms and ammunition, ransacked the treasury, set the Magazine House on fire and preceded towards Tippera.

Military sent to stop rebellion

The EIC was concerned about a further uprising of the sepoys, and sent three companies of the 54th Regiment and one hundred seamen to Dhaka. Simultaneously a Naval Brigade was sent to Jessore, Rangpur, Dinajpur and some other districts of Bangladesh.

Organised local volunteers, consisting mostly of European residents, took special measures for the protection of Dhaka. The situation became tense when the Naval Brigade arrived at Dhaka to disarm the sepoys stationed there. On 22 November, the sepoys stationed at Lalbagh Fort resisted the process of disarming.

Trials

In the skirmish that followed, several sepoys were killed and others arrested while many of them fled towards Mymensingh. Most of the fugitives were, however, arrested and put up for summary trial by a hurriedly constituted Court Martial. Of the accused sepoys, 11 were sentenced to death and the rest were sentenced to life imprisonment.

Tension and excitement persisted in different parts of Bangladesh, especially in the districts of Sylhet, Mymensingh, Dinajpur and Jessore. Several skirmishes occurred between the fugitive sepoys and European soldiers and resulted in loss of lives on both sides. Summary trials by local judges of the captured and disarmed sepoys took place in Sylhet and Jessore. Hanging and deportation were common features of these trials.

British too strong to be defeated

Although both Delhi and Lucknow had fallen to the sepoys, the British proved too strong to be defeated by an uncoordinated uprising across many areas. By September 1857, both Delhi and Lucknow had been regained and the British finally put down the last pockets of resistance at the end of August 1858.

Reasons for the failure of the uprising

Lack of unity

The role and reaction of various classes of people of Bangladesh during the sepoy revolt present a gloomy picture. The landed aristocracy was decidedly opposed to the sepoys and some of them even supported the British by supplying carts, carriages and elephants, by informing them about the movements of the fleeing sepoys and by organising local volunteer corps to resist the sepoys. The government acknowledged such services of the landed aristocracy with thanks and subsequently awarded titles of Nawab, Khan Bahadur, Khan Shaheb, Rai Bahadur, Rai Shaheb etc. and financial rewards.

Following the example set by the landed aristocracy, the middle class also sided with the company's government. The common people and the peasantry as a whole were apathetic and remained untouched by the sepoy revolt, though they suffered much from increased prices evident in times of war.

British strengths

A major reason for the failure to win the war was that the British were just too strong. Britain was one of the most powerful nations in the world and its troops were experienced in warfare and highly trained in modern methods of fighting. The British were skilled at playing various

groups off against each other and at playing on the fears of the aristocracy by portraying the uprising as a threat to the established social hierarchy.

Activity: Expressing an opinion

Do you think that the uprising failed because the Indians were too weak or the British were too strong? Support your answer with evidence from this section.

Impact of the war on the Muslims of the subcontinent

Aside from the overall deterioration in relations between the British and their Indian subjects after the rebellion, there was also an impact on the Indians themselves. The Muslims lost much of the influence and power they held before the rebellion, and the Hindus filled the vacuum left by the Muslims. While the British attitude changed radically towards the Indians, the most bitter and widespread hostility was reserved for the Muslim community. They were blamed by the British for much of the rebellious activity, which the British saw as an attempt to restore the authority of the Moghul emperor.

Because 'Muslims stood prejudiced against western education', they 'had to remain in the background for some time', while the Hindus, who were more favourable in the adoption of this western style of education and learning English, benefited under the government. This situation of a Muslim decline in influence had long-term effects on the Muslim community right up until the early part of the twentieth century.

Source: The Sepoy Mutiny of 1857, <http://www.cyberessays.com/History/48.htm>

Different interpretations of the war

The events of 1857 show how history can be a matter of interpretation.

To Indian historians, the war of independence of 1857 was an important landmark in the history of the subcontinent. It marked the beginning of the country's struggle for independence after a century of foreign domination. The country witnessed a popular upsurge of deep-seated and widespread discontent against the foreign rulers. The revolt of the Sepoys, accompanied by that of the civil population, was so fervent that the very foundation of the British rule in India was shaken. It appeared for some time that British control had disappeared.

However, to the British, the events of 1857 are known as 'The Indian Mutiny', and until well into the 20th century were considered to have been a revolt against British authority that had to be crushed in order to maintain control.

Sourcework

Source A

Whilst it is true that large numbers of European women and children were murdered with great brutality, many of the stories were exaggerated. The British forces felt that every male capable of carrying weapons was guilty of such crimes.

Why do you think the British might have exaggerated stories of Indian brutality in 1857?

Bangladesh Studies O Level (7094) Pilot Textbook

Topic 4 (c) British government in the subcontinent and events leading to independence in 1947

■

Purpose of this section

This section explains how British control was consolidated, but finally lost, in the first half of the twentieth century.

Summary

From the beginning of the twentieth century, opposition to British rule in India was becoming more organised, particularly after the formation of the Muslim League in 1906. However, although there were times when Muslim and Hindu opponents worked together, often their efforts were undermined by communal rivalry.

The British reaction to this opposition varied from oppression to concession. By 1947, the decision had been made to leave India. The only question was how India was to be ruled after the British left. The answer was that religious and cultural divisions were so strong that not only India, but also Bengal, was partitioned.

Timeline showing the main events of the leading to independence in 1947

1905	First Partition of Bengal
1906	Muslim League formed
1911	Bengal partition reversed
1916	Lucknow Pact
1919	Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms
1920	Khilafat Movement
1923	Bengal Pact
1927	Simon Commission
1930-1932	Round Table Conferences
1935	The Government of India Act
1936	Krishak-Praja Party set up
1940	Lahore Resolution
1941	Cripps Mission
1942	Quit India Resolution
1946	Cabinet Mission
1946	Direct Action Day
1947	India Independence Act

The Partition of Bengal, 1905 and its aftermath

Why?

At the end of the nineteenth century, Bengal had a population of 85 million (54 million Hindus and 31 million Muslims). The province of Bengal included not only west and east Bengal (now Bangladesh), but also Bihar and Orissa. It was a huge area with a population three times the size of Britain at that time. The British found it too large to administer efficiently, and in 1905 **Viceroy Curzon** partitioned Bengal by detaching east Bengal from the province, and added it to Assam to form a new province of **East Bengal**, with Dhaka as the capital. The capital of **West Bengal** was Calcutta.



Lord Curzon (source: Banglapedia, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh)

Overall reaction

Although the scheme may have been justified from the viewpoint of administrative efficiency, it did not take into account Bengali sentiment and nationalist feeling, which Curzon did not believe existed. But Bengali sentiment was very strong, and the Bengalis, mostly the Hindu middle-class *bhadralok*, were convinced that Curzon had deliberately divided their people because of their political activities. They felt that he wanted to reduce their effectiveness by breaking up the province into two: a relatively prosperous West Bengal with a mainly Hindu in population in which Bengalis were reduced to a minority amongst Biharis and Oriyas, and a backward East Bengal which was largely Muslim.

Swadeshi and Boycott movements: protests at partition

The partition of Bengal created an uproar in the province, and more than two thousand public meetings were held in protest at the measure. Rabindranath Tagore wrote the song 'Banglar Mati, Banglar Jal' calling for accord and unity between the Hindu and Muslim Bengalis.

This time, however, the Indian leaders did not stop with words, and protests were followed by action in the form of the Swadeshi and Boycott* movements. The Bengali people were urged to boycott British cloth and other goods and to use Indian products instead. The aims were:

- to put economic pressure on the British in order to force them to undo the partition.

- to promote Indian industry.

Unlike abstract slogans of 'democracy' and 'individual rights', 'Swadeshi' and 'Boycott'* were not only ideas that the people could understand, but also movements in which they could participate. Soon, the washermen of Kalighat refused to wash foreign clothes; the cobblers of Faridpur would not mend English shoes; and all over Bengal English cloth, cigarettes and other goods were bought up and burnt in public.

**The word 'Boycott' is derived from Captain Boycott, the agent of an important Irish landlord in the 1880s. In order to protest against his eviction of tenants, the Irish Land League ordered the people to have no dealings with him. He could buy nothing and get nothing from them. Boycotting soon became part of the people's campaign against all unpopular landlords.*

Comprehension Question

1. Why did the British say they partitioned Bengal?
2. What did the people of Bengal think was the real reason?

Sourcework Question

Rabindranath Tagore wrote a novel based on events at this time. In the novel the heroine says:

I must burn all my foreign clothes. I do not wish ever to wear them again in this life.

What can you tell about how people felt about the Partition of Bengal from this extract?

Muslim reaction: benefits to partition

Not everyone was opposed to partition. The agitation against the partition of Bengal had been almost entirely run by the Hindu middle class and did not represent the sentiment of the Muslims of eastern Bengal, many of whom thought that the partition would lead to economic and social development of their region. Therefore, they felt that they should set up a separate political organisation to represent their views and demands.

They had watched the reaction of the Hindus to the partition of Bengal with dismay. They saw a massive wave of organised protest which they feared would result in the partition being

reversed. They knew that they, the Muslims, were not able to provide such a level of protest to maintain the partition. It was time to act.

The Simla Deputation

On 8 October 1906 a deputation of prominent Muslims, lead by the **Aga Khan**, visited **Viceroy Minto** at Simla. There, they requested that the Muslims' position in India *'should be estimated not merely on their numerical strength but in respect to the political importance of their community and the service it has rendered to the Empire'*

Their demands were set out in what has become known as The Simla Deputation. In it they asked that:

in all local and provincial elections Muslims should have their own representatives, who would be elected only by Muslim voters.

in the councils, the Muslims should have a higher percentage of seats than their percentage of the population.

Lord Minto accepted their arguments and he agreed to separate representation for the Muslims.

The formation of the Muslim League

The Muslims were encouraged by their success in persuading Lord Minto to allow separate electorates and they decided that the time was now right to form their own political party.

There were several reasons for this:

Although the British had accepted the Simla Deputation and partitioned Bengal to establish a Muslim-dominant East Bengal, the Muslim community still felt that it lacked the influence that the Hindus had.

The British had partitioned Bengal, but this had resulted in a feeling of outrage in the Hindu community. This had reinforced the division between Muslim and Hindu and had led Muslim leaders to believe that it was even more vital to establish their own political organisation.

In 1906, Muslim leaders met at the twentieth session of the Muhammadan Educational Conference at Dhaka. After the conference had finished a meeting was called, chaired by Nawab Viqar-ul-Mulk, to consider setting up an organisation to be called the **All-India Muslim League**.

At the first meeting of the new organisation in December 1906, the League declared that its objectives were to:

protect and advance the political rights and interests of Muslims in India,

represent Muslim needs and aspirations to the government of India,

promote feelings of loyalty to the British government,

remove any misunderstandings amongst the Muslims as to the intentions of any government measure,

prevent the rise of hostility in Muslims towards other communities in India.

The British welcomed the formation of the Muslim League. It was led by landowners and princes, who were moderate in their views and who could help to counter the Hindu protests that were growing, particularly after the partition of Bengal.

Comprehension Questions

1. Do you think it was inevitable that the Muslims would set up their own political organisation? Explain your answer.
2. Why do you think one of the objectives of the Muslim League was to 'promote feelings of loyalty to the British government'?

Bengal Partition reversed

The Muslims felt it was vital to have formed their own political organisation when, in 1911, the British showed that they could not be trusted to protect Muslim interests. **Lord Hardinge**, the new Viceroy, agreed to reverse the partition of Bengal. The decision was announced at a *darbar* in Delhi on 12 December by King George V, who was visiting India at the time. The British tried to suggest that they had reversed the partition as part of their policy in governing India. In reality, they had been forced into the move by the fierce opposition of the Bengali Hindus. However, the British also moved the capital from Calcutta to Delhi to show that the Bengali Hindus' opposition had not been completely successful.

The Lucknow Pact, 1916: a joint demand for political reform from Hindus and Muslims

The failure of the British to grant more rights to the Indians in the period up to 1914, and their policy of repression during the First World War, had moved Congress and the Muslim League closer together. In 1916, they held their annual sessions in the same city and drew up the Lucknow Pact. Congress agreed that:

Muslims had the right to separate electorates in electing representatives to the Imperial and Provincial Legislative Councils. This would apply even to Punjab and Bengal where they did not yet exist.

Although they represented only one quarter of the population, Muslims should be given one third of the seats in the Councils.

No Act affecting a community should be passed unless three-quarters of that community's members on the council supported it.

These were major concessions by Congress and they showed how keen it was to gain the support of the Muslim League. Congress leaders had previously objected strongly to the principle of separate electorates and this was the first time that they had moved away from their belief that India was one indivisible nation.

The Lucknow Pact was a significant moment in the movement towards self-rule and was the first time that the Hindus and Muslims had made a joint demand for political reform to the British. It led to a growing belief in India that home rule (self-government) was a real possibility. During 1917, two Home Rule Leagues campaigned across India. The Pact marked the high-water mark of Hindu-Muslim unity. It was to be short-lived, however, as the relations between the Hindus and Muslims once more worsened in the 1920s.

Comprehension Questions

Why was the Lucknow Pact drawn up?

What is its importance in the history of relations between the Hindus and the Muslims?

The Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms, 1919: a disappointing attempt to involve Indians in administration

Worried about the progress of the First World War, the British decided that something must be done to secure the loyalty of the Indians. In August 1917, Mr. **Edwin Montagu**, Secretary

of State for India, announced in the British Parliament that a new policy would be adopted. It would involve the increasing association of Indians in every branch of the administration and the gradual development of self-governing institutions.

The purpose of the new policy was thus to grant responsible and representative government to India in stages. In order to judge the situation in the country for himself, Montagu paid a visit to India late in 1917. He was the first member of the British government to do so. In 1918, Montagu along with the **Viceroy Lord Chelmsford** (1916-21) published a 'Report on Indian constitutional Reforms'. The two leaders stated that a system of government should be introduced in India which gave '*some measure of responsibility to representatives chosen by an electorate*'. This report formed the basis of the Government of India Act, 1919, more commonly known as the 'Montford Reforms'.

It proposed that there should be an elected Legislative Assembly with separate electorates for Muslims and Sikhs, with 32 seats reserved for Muslims. In the provinces, a new system of **dyarchy** was introduced. Under this system areas of responsibility were divided into two lists.

Reserved subjects

Justice

Police

Revenue

Power Resources

Press and Publication

Transferred subjects

Local government

Education

Public Health

Public Works

Forests

Reserved subjects were controlled by the provincial governor and his Executive Council and transferred subjects were entrusted to ministers responsible to provincial Legislative Councils.

If the British thought that they would be welcomed with enthusiasm by a grateful Indian population, they were mistaken. Many Indians had fought with the British in the War and they expected much greater concessions. Congress and the Muslim League had recently come together, calling for self-rule, and they were bitterly disappointed by the new structure. At a special session of Congress in August 1918, the reforms were condemned as *'inadequate, unsatisfactory and disappointing'*.

Comprehension Question

Why do you think Congress described the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms as 'inadequate, unsatisfactory and disappointing'?

The Khilafat Movement, 1920: non-cooperation following treatment of Turkey

The Khilafat Movement started because of the treatment of Turkey by the British after the First World War. Turkey was a Muslim country, and its ruler, the Sultan, was considered to be the head of the worldwide Islamic community. When the British threatened to take territory away from the Khalif after World War One, Muslims in India were outraged and formed the Khilafat Movement to protect the Sultan and their religion.

In January 1920, a deputation from the Khilafat Movement called on the Viceroy to ask for fairness in the treatment of Turkey in the peace treaties which ended World War One. Turkey had been defeated and the Muslims feared that it would be treated in the same way as Germany and Austria. But whilst the delegation was in England, the terms of the treaty concerning Turkey (the **Treaty of Sevres**) were announced. Amongst other things the treaty said that the Turkish Empire was to be split up.

Non-cooperation programme

On 22 June 1920, the Muslims in India sent a message to the Viceroy warning that if the terms of the unfair treaty of Sevres were imposed on Turkey, then a policy of non-cooperation in the country would begin on 1 August. **Gandhi** began a tour of India to rally support for the Khilafat cause. The non-cooperation programme was greeted with enthusiasm by both Hindus and Muslims alike. It involved:

surrendering of titles and resigning from seats in local bodies

withdrawing children from government schools

boycotting British courts

refusing to volunteer to join the armed forces

boycotting foreign goods

refusing to stand for election.

These measures helped to turn the Khilafat Movement into a general anti-British protest movement. There was a great deal of support across the country and the British were highly embarrassed when visits by British royal princes were greeted with demonstrations and strikes. For example, when the Prince of Wales visited Bombay in 1921, there was a nationwide strike and demonstrations in Bombay led to anti-British rioting in which 53 people were killed.

The British reacted by introducing a policy of repression involving widespread arrests. By the end of 1921, there were more than 30,000 political prisoners in India's jails. The Khilafat Movement had attracted Muslims and Hindus alike and, for a short while, communal rivalry was put aside.

Comprehension Questions

1. Why do you think Gandhi's policy of non-cooperation was so popular in India?
2. Why do you think the British were particularly offended when visits by the royal princes were met with demonstrations?

Law and order breaks down

The British were concerned that the Khilafat Movement was a threat to law and order, and it is true that there were disturbances across India. In November 1921, riots broke out in Nilambur which led to a pitched battle between the locals and British soldiers. At Tirur, the police station was set on fire and arms and ammunition stolen. Perhaps the most famous of incident occurred in Chauri-Chaura, a village in Gorakhpur district. In February 1922, 21 policemen were killed after they fired on a political procession.

Non-cooperation movement called off

Gandhi had already begun to have reservations about the wisdom of his civil disobedience campaign, which had resulted in disturbances in Madras, Calcutta and Bombay. Now he decided that India was not yet ready for a mass campaign and he called off the movement. His decision upset many Congress leaders, and the Muslims, too, accused Gandhi of retreating just when the cause was being taken up with enthusiasm by the Indian people. The British saw how Gandhi's support had declined and, a few weeks after he called off his civil disobedience campaign, he was arrested and sentenced to six years' imprisonment.

Discussion/Reflection Question

Do you agree that it was foolish of Gandhi to call off the non-cooperation campaign just because some policeman had been killed in Chauri-Chaura?

Explain your answer.

The decision to call off the civil disobedience campaign weakened the Hindu-Muslim unity, but the Muslims were determined to carry on with the Khilafat Movement. Unfortunately, they cared more about the fate of the Khalifa than did the new rulers of Turkey. In 1922, the Sultan was deprived of political power. Two years later, the new leader, Kemal Attaturk, abolished the Khilafat and exiled the Khalifa, Abdul Majeed. It made no difference what Indian Muslims or British politicians wanted. The Turks themselves had abolished the Khilafat. Consequently the Khilafat Movement in India also came to an end.

The Bengal Pact, 1923: another attempt to unite the two communities in Bengal



CR Das (source: Banglapedia, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh)

In the wake of the break-up of short-lived Hindu-Muslim political alliance, another bold attempt was taken up to unite the two communities in Bengal in the early 1920s. It was started by **C R Das**, a man of vision who sincerely believed in the principle of sharing political power with the majority Muslim community of the province. Within the Congress, he formed a faction called **Swarajya Party** and became very popular within a short period. In a bid to seek the active cooperation of the Muslims, C R Das held discussions with prominent Muslim leaders of Bengal, and early in December 1923 came to an agreement with them, which became known as the Bengal Pact.

The terms of the Pact included the following:

- a. Representation in the Bengal Legislative Council would be on population basis with separate electorates.
- b. Representation in the local bodies would be on the proportion of 60% to the majority community and 40% to the minority community.
- c. Regarding Government appointments, it was decided 55% of the appointments

should go to the Muslims. Till the above percentage was attained, 80% of posts would go to the Muslims and the remaining 20% should go to the Hindus.

- d. No resolution or enactment would be allowed to move without the consent of 75% of the elected members of the affected community.
- e. Music in processions would not be allowed in front of the mosques.
- f. No legislation in respect of cow-killing for food would be taken up in the Council and endeavours should be made outside the Council to bring about an understanding between the two communities. Cow-killing should be taken up in such a manner as not to wound the religious feelings of the Hindus and cow-killing for religious purpose should not be interfered with.

Though the Pact was opposed by the majority of the Congress leadership, there was popular support for C R Das' non-communal political agenda. Unfortunately, his premature death in 1925 came as a blow to the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity. His death was followed by the rejection of the Pact, even by some of his own followers. A large number of Bengali Muslim politicians became shocked at this act and began to move away from the Congress as well as the Swarajya Party.

Adapted from Banglapedia, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh

The Simon Commission, 1927: possibility of constitutional change

It was not until 1927 that the national movement was roused to action again. The new Viceroy, **Lord Irwin** (1926-31), announced that a Commission under **Sir John Simon** would be visiting India. The Act of 1919 had provided that after ten years, a Commission would be appointed to report on the possibility of constitutional change. Irwin pointed out that as a gesture of goodwill, the Simon Commission was being sent two years before it was strictly necessary.

Indians excluded from Commission

However, the Commission was to include no Indians and was to be responsible solely to the British Parliament. The Indian leaders protested strongly. The notion that Indians had no right to decide their future constitution for themselves, but must wait on the British for favours was unacceptable to them. At the Madras session in 1927, **Jawaharlal Nehru** put forward a resolution for complete independence and called for a boycott of the Commission. His views were upheld, and when the Simon Commission arrived in India in February 1928, it was

boycotted by every political party and greeted with black flags and cries of 'Simon, go back'. After many years, the nationalist movement seemed to be picking up momentum again.

The Nehru Report: a constitution by Indians

In May 1928, members of the Congress, the Muslim League, the Liberals, the Hindu Mahasabha and the Central Sikh League met in an All-Party Conference to draft a constitution which the Indian people thought should be used for their country. **Pandit Motilal Nehru** chaired a committee which devised this constitution, which was contained in the 'Nehru Report' which was overwhelmingly approved by the All-Party Conference in September 1928.

The Nehru Report called for:

immediate Dominion Status for India (that meant India would become independent, but remain a member of the Commonwealth accepting the British monarch as Head of State)

India to be a federation with a two-chamber parliament

the protection of minorities through a system of reserving seats in the two chambers (though it did not support separate electorates)

the vote for all adult men and women.

Gandhi proposed a resolution saying that the British should be given one year to accept the recommendations of the Nehru Report or a campaign of non-cooperation would begin. The resolution was passed.

The Round Table Conferences, 1930-1932: to discuss the British recommendations

Despite the opposition it faced, the Simon Commission still managed to produce a two-volume report in 1930. The report had little in it to cheer the Muslim community. Although it supported the idea of separate electorates, it rejected Muslims having a one-third share of seats in the Central Assembly and the idea of Sindh being separated from Bombay. The British then called a Round Table Conference to discuss the commission's recommendations.

The First Round Table Conference, November 1930: Congress refuses to attend

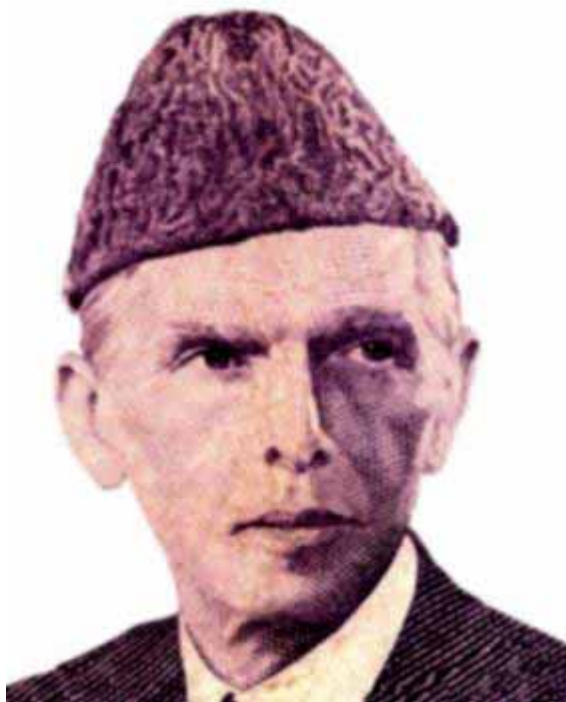
The first conference was held in London in November 1930. It was attended by the Muslim League, the Liberals and representatives of the Princely States. However, Congress refused

to attend unless there was a guarantee that anything agreed at the conference would be implemented. No such guarantee was given. Instead of attending, Congress began its programme of non-cooperation. Since Congress was India's largest party, it was difficult for significant progress to be made in the talks. There were, however, some advances made:

The princes declared that they would join a future federation of India as long as their rights were recognized.

The British agreed that representative government should be introduced at provincial level.

The Muslims, whose representatives included **Jinnah**, **Maulana Muhammad Ali** and the **Aga Khan**, left the conference feeling some ground had been gained.



Jinnah (source: Banglapedia, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh)

The Second Round Table Conference, September 1931: little agreed

When the Indian representatives returned from the first Round Table Conference, they urged **Gandhi** to stop his non-cooperation and agree to attend the next set of talks. In February 1931, Gandhi met the Viceroy, **Lord Irwin** in the first of a series of meetings to agree the terms of future progress. Some British politicians, especially **Winston Churchill**, objected to Irwin holding talks with someone who had just been imprisoned for opposition to British rule. Irwin, however, understood the need to bring Congress into the discussions.

So on 5 March 1931, the **Gandhi-Irwin Pact** was signed. Irwin agreed to release most political prisoners and return property seized by the government; Gandhi agreed to call off the non-cooperation campaign and attend the next round of talks. He also agreed to give up his demand for full independence in return for a promise that in a federal India Indians would have a genuine say in how they were governed.

The second Round Table Conference took place in London between September and December 1931. It failed for two reasons:

The Labour Party had lost power in Britain and the new coalition government was less keen to reach a compromise in India.

Gandhi took a hard line in the talks and refused to recognise the problems of the minorities in the subcontinent.

Consequently, little was achieved at the conference. The British warned that if agreement could not soon be reached, they would impose their own solution to the 'Indian problem'.

The Third Round Table Conference, November 1932: poor attendance

The third Round Table Conference stood little chance of success. Lord Irwin had been replaced as Viceroy by **Lord Willington**, who was much less prepared to make concessions. In places, the non-cooperation movement restarted and Willington responded by having Congress leaders, including Gandhi and Nehru arrested. In January 1932, Congress formally re-started the non-cooperation campaign.

The events of 1932 meant that none of the parties involved in the third Round Table Conference expected it to achieve anything. Indeed, Congress boycotted the talks, as did all the major princes. **Jinnah** had gone into voluntary exile, disillusioned with the lack of progress being made, and was not even invited to the conference. The Muslims were therefore represented by the Aga Khan, but there were only 46 delegates and the meeting broke up with nothing of any substance agreed.

Comprehension Questions

1. Why did the Round Table Conferences fail?
2. *'Since they failed, it was a waste of time having the conferences.'*
Explain whether you agree with this statement.

The Government of India Act, 1935: power to the people?

Despite the failure of the Round Table conferences, in March 1933, the British government announced its proposals for how India should be governed. In August 1935, the proposals were made legal by the **Government of India Act** and became law. This was the last major legislation that the British government passed before independence was granted. Its main terms were:

India was to be a federation including both the provinces of British India and any Princely States which chose to join.

There were to be two houses of parliament at central government level. The upper house (Council of State) and the lower house (Assembly). Dyarchy was dropped at provincial level, but introduced at central government level.

Certain 'reserved' subjects (defence, foreign affairs, ecclesiastical affairs and the administration of the tribal areas) were to be administered exclusively by the Governor-General, assisted by up to three appointed Councillors.

At provincial level, dyarchy was replaced with a system in which provinces were given a large degree of autonomy. The ministers of provinces were, in effect, heads of provincial administration and provincial governors were instructed to act on their advice except in areas where they had special responsibilities (the peace of the province and the rights of minorities).

The Act appeared to grant real power to the people of India, but in reality things were a little different:

The Governor-General was head of the Federation and could exert special powers in the reserved subjects.

Provincial governors also had special powers in the two reserved areas. They had the authority to dismiss ministers and even the right to dismiss the whole administration and rule by proclamation during a period of emergency.

Although the Act appeared to give the Indian people a say in running their own country, there was a very limited franchise. The property qualification for voting meant that only 25% of India's population was allowed to vote in the provincial elections.

The Act is unwelcome but parties agree to participate in elections

The Government of India Act was opposed on all sides in India. The princes resented the loss of power it would entail, Nehru called it a 'Charter of Slavery' and said that it had so many safeguards that it was like 'a machine with strong brakes but no engine'. To Jinnah, it was simply 'thoroughly rotten, fundamentally bad and totally unacceptable'

Comprehension Question

What do you think Nehru meant when he described the Government of India Act as 'a machine with strong brakes, but no engine'?

Though both Congress and the Muslim League opposed the Act, they agreed to participate in the forthcoming provincial elections of 1937, to be conducted under the provisions of the Act. During this time, along with the Congress and Muslim League, a new party called the **Krishak Praja Party** became very influential.

Provincial government and politics in Bengal, 1937-1947

Krishak-Praja Party: appeals to the rural masses



AK Fazlul Huq (source: Banglapedia, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh)

The Krishak Praja Party (KPP) was founded in 1936 by **A K Fazlul Huq**. As the leader of rural society, Fazlul Huq understood the importance of appealing to the rural masses. So the

KPP programme for the elections included:

abolition of the Permanent Settlement system of revenue

making peasants the absolute proprietors of land

reduction of rent rate

freeing the indebted peasantry from the bondage of the *mahajan* class

giving interest free loans to peasants

creating irrigation facilities by digging canals all over the country and making the river navigation free by eliminating engulfing water hyacinths

introduction of free primary education.

Huq's oratory was as attractive as his political programme to the peasantry. His approach was non-communal and hence he commanded respect from the scheduled caste Hindu peasantry as well. The KPP election manifesto was finally reduced to one election slogan: *Dhal-Bhat* (rice and pulse) for all. The peasant voters responded to Huq by supporting him in a big way. Though established only a year previously, his party secured third position among contesting political parties in terms of number of seats won in the elections. In summary, the Congress party got 52 seats, Muslim League 39, KPP 36, and various splinter groups and independent candidates won the rest of the total 250 seats. Of the 36 members elected with KPP tickets, 33 were from East Bengal. The KPP thus emerged essentially as an East Bengal peasant party.

The decline of the KPP

Ironically, the decline of the KPP began immediately after its spectacular electoral victory. Fazlul Huq, the KPP leader, formed a coalition ministry with the support and participation of the Muslim League and some other smaller groups and independent members. As the Chief Minister, Fazlul Huq seemed to have concentrated his attention more on power politics than on developing his party. Of the 11 ministers in his cabinet, only two, including him, were from the KPP and the rest were from the Muslim League and other factions. This dissatisfied a number of influential members, thus weakening the KPP.

Muslim League makes a come-back

In the meantime, the Muslim League began to rework its strategy and strength in all-Indian as

well as provincial level. From November 1937 onwards, the Muslim League leadership began to re-organise the party from the grass-root level. The bulk of the Muslim population was poor, downtrodden and exploited by both the Hindu and Muslim upper classes. Their discontent was basically economic. But it was now given a religious shape by the Muslim League. "Islam is in danger" -- was the cry by which the support of the Muslim masses was secured. Gradually, Jinnah put forward the 'two-nation' theory: that Muslims were divided from Hindus not merely by religion, but also culturally and racially; that they were, in fact, a nation within a nation. The ascendancy of the Muslim League was so rapid that by 1943, when the Huq Ministry fell, the KPP had become practically non-existent. The party contested the elections of 1946 but got only four seats, whereas the Muslim League got 114 seats. After the partition, AK Fazlul Huq came to Dhaka and revived his party under a new name, **Krishak Sramik Party**, which survived until 1958.

Adapted from Banglapedia, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh

The Second World War and the move towards partition

The Outbreak of War, 1939

On 3 September 1939, Britain announced that it was at war with Nazi Germany. On the same day, **Viceroy Linlithgow** announced that India, too, was at war with Germany.

Congress resigns from government

Congress objected to this announcement, saying that if India was to fight, it could only do so if it were granted a promise of full independence. The British would not grant this, but instead promised Dominion status after the war. Congress could not accept this and called on its members to resign from government. Before doing so, however, it passed a resolution setting out its 'entire disapproval' of Nazism and Fascism. It supported the British cause, but would not support Britain without a promise of independence.

Muslim League demands

The Muslim League also had demands to be met before it would agree to support the British. Jinnah demanded:

an end to the anti-Muslim policies by Congress

that no law affecting Muslims should be passed unless two-thirds of Muslim members supported it

that Congress should agree to form coalitions in provincial administrations.

Neither the British, nor Congress, would agree to these demands. Consequently, throughout the war the Muslim League's position was one where it did not give full support to the British. However, like Congress, it disapproved of Nazism and Fascism, so did not go as far as actually opposing the British.

The divide between Congress and the Muslim League widens

As Congress members had resigned from government, on 22 December 1939, the Muslim League called a 'Day of Deliverance' across the sub-continent to celebrate the end of the 'tyranny, oppression and injustice' that had occurred under Congress rule. Congress was deeply offended by this and Nehru was moved to comment on how Congress and the Muslim League now seemed to agree on very little.

The Lahore Resolution, 1940: time to consider a Muslim state

Two years of Congress rule, and a growing realisation that the British would soon be forced to leave India, convinced Jinnah that it was time to consider establishing a Muslim state. At the annual session of the Muslim League held in Lahore on 22 March 1940, the premier of Bengal, Fazl-ul-Haq, put forward a resolution demanding that:

Regions in which the Muslims are numerically a majority, as in the north-western and eastern zone of India, should be grouped to constitute independent states in which the constituent units shall be autonomous and sovereign.

Comprehension Questions

1. Why had Jinnah changed his mind about the formation of a Muslim state by 1940?
2. Pick out the words in Fazl-ul-Haq's resolution which you think are especially important. Explain why you chose these words.

This resolution was passed unanimously and soon became known as the 'Lahore Resolution'. The Muslims of the subcontinent had finally got their rallying call. The years of oppression from the British and the Hindus were to be put behind them.

(In 1946, however, in a fundamental departure from the original Lahore Resolution, the Muslim League replaced word 'states' by simply 'state.' Some leading figures from Bengal such as **Abul Hashim** opposed this unwarranted amendment, which meant a single state for

the Muslims of India instead of several states, originally proposed in 1940. However, the Muslim leadership continued to stick to the amendment and this reflected in the formation a single state for the Muslims of India, comprising West and East Pakistan.)

The Cripps Mission, 1941: trying to win support for the British war effort

In March 1941, the British sent **Sir Stafford Cripps**, a member of the Cabinet, to India to see if a compromise could be reached which would win support for the British war effort. Cripps proposed that:

after the war an Indian Union would be set up with Dominion status (though individual provinces could opt out of the Union and negotiate their own independence)

after the war a Constituent Assembly should frame a new constitution.

elections for the Constituent Assembly would be held immediately after the war.

The Muslim League rejected the plan immediately, as it contained no reference to the establishment of Pakistan. Jinnah was pleased to see, however, that the right to opt out of a future Union was included. This showed that the British realised the need to protect minority interests.

Congress also rejected the Cripps proposals, as it was now demanding immediate control of India's affairs. It was not prepared to wait until the war was over and wasn't sure that it trusted the British to deliver their promises. Gandhi called the proposals 'a post-dated cheque on a failing bank'. Congress knew that the British were desperate and intended to exploit this.

Comprehension Questions

1. Why did both the Muslim League and Congress reject the Cripps proposals?
2. What did Gandhi mean when he called the proposals 'a post-dated cheque on a failing bank'?

The Quit India Resolution, 1942: a Hindu attempt to drive the British out

In May 1942, Gandhi spoke at a Congress meeting in Allahabad. He talked of how 'British behaviour towards India has filled me great pain'. He argued that if the British left India, there would no longer be a threat of a Japanese invasion. So they should be persuaded to go by a non-violent protest. On 8 August 1942, the All-India Congress Committee passed its 'Quit

India Resolution' calling for the immediate withdrawal of the British. To support the campaign, there should be 'a mass struggle on non-violent lines on the widest possible scale'.

Two days later, Gandhi, Nehru and other senior Congress figures were arrested. The Congress Party was banned. For several weeks, there was widespread rioting and the British lost control in some parts of the country. Only the strongest measures, including the use of machine guns and aerial bombing, restored their rule – at the cost of thousands of Indian lives.

The Muslim League did not approve of the Quit India campaign. It saw the Hindus' attempts to drive the British out as a means of gaining control in India to exercise their own, anti-Muslim, wishes. Jinnah criticised the Quit India campaign as 'blackmail', saying that Congress was trying to exploit Britain's problems to win advantages for itself. After Gandhi was released from prison, he and Gandhi met for talks but failed to agree on the best way to rid India of the British.

The divide grows in 1945

In 1945, the Second World War ended. The British war-time leader, Winston Churchill, and the Conservative Party were defeated in a general election. The new Prime Minister, **Clement Attlee**, and his Labour Party were committed to self-government in India. Wavell was told to organise elections to both provincial and central assemblies and then set up an Executive Council with 'the support of the main Indian parties'. The elections were to show just how divided India had become.

Congress claimed to represent all Indians and all communities. It fought the election on a policy of an undivided and independent India. The Muslim League, on the other hand, appealed to the Muslim community with a policy of setting up an independent Muslim homeland. The results were announced in December 1945.

The Muslim League won 87% of the Muslim vote, all 30 Muslim seats in the Central Legislative Assembly and 446 of the 495 Muslim seats in the provincial elections. It took control in Bengal and Sindh and was the largest party in Punjab.

Congress won 91% of the non-Muslim vote and took control in the other eight states. The victory of Congress in the NWFP was a serious blow to the Muslim League, as Congress took 19 Muslim seats compared to the Muslim League's 17 seats.

It was now clear that there could be no settlement in India without its approval.

The Cabinet Mission Plan, 1946: an attempt to find a settlement acceptable to all

In March 1946, the British made their final effort to settle the differences within India. A three-man delegation (**Lord Pethick-Lawrence**, Secretary of State for India, **Sir Stafford Cripps**, President of the Board of Trade and **A.V. Alexander**, First Lord of the Admiralty) was sent to India to try find a settlement acceptable to all. This '**Cabinet Mission**' arrived in New Delhi on 24 March 1946 and met representatives of the Muslim League, Congress, the Sikhs and the Hindu Mahasabha.

The delegation soon found that there was little common ground between the Muslim League and Congress. Jinnah was insisting on the formation of Pakistan comprising six provinces. Once this was established, he might consider the setting up of a central agency of India and Pakistan to look after certain common subjects. Congress was opposed to any partition and would not accept Jinnah's ideas.

The Cabinet Mission therefore decided on a different approach. It proposed that an interim government should be set up to rule India whilst the British withdrawal was organised. The government would form an All-India Commission from members of the Provincial and Central Legislatures. The commission would then decide whether there should be one or two states after the British had left.

Neither Congress nor the Muslim League agreed to the new plan, but the delegation continued its work and in May 1946 the Cabinet Mission announced its final plan.

It rejected the idea of establishing Pakistan.

Instead there would be three different parts to a post-British India:

1. 1. The Hindu majority territories
2. 2. The western Muslim provinces
3. 3. Bengal and Assam

Each part would have local autonomy and would be able to draw up its own constitution.

Foreign affairs, defence and communication would be dealt with a central Indian Union.

Cabinet Plan is dropped

The Muslim League stated that it was prepared to nominate members to an interim cabinet to oversee the move to independence based on this plan. Nehru, however, said that Congress would not feel bound by the plan once the British had left. The Muslim League felt that this made further discussions pointless. Any agreement might just be overturned after the British had gone. So the Cabinet Plan was dropped.

Comprehension Questions

1. Why did the Muslim League believe that it should consider the Cabinet Mission proposal of May 1946?
2. Why did that proposal fail?

Direct Action Day, 1946: showing Muslim solidarity

By late summer 1946, it was clear that the British withdrawal from India was imminent. The Muslims feared that the British might just pull out and leave India to sort out its own problems. If that happened, the Muslims would surely suffer at the hands of the overwhelming Hindu majority. What was needed was a show of Muslim solidarity and an indication of Muslim strength to both the British and Congress.

In July 1946, the Muslim League passed a resolution declaring that it should prepare for the final struggle against both the British and Congress. On 16 August, the Muslim League called for a 'Direct Action Day to show the strength of Muslim feelings. In many places, thousands demonstrated peacefully to show Muslim solidarity. In Calcutta, however, the demonstration turned to violence in which up to 4,000 people died in the 'Great Calcutta Killing'.

Towards independence, 1947

Despite the violence and the failure to reach agreement between Congress and the Muslim League, the British were determined to make arrangements for leaving India.

Mountbatten plans speedy transfer of power

In February 1947, Attlee announced that the British would leave India no later than June 1948. A new Viceroy, **Viscount Mountbatten**, was sent to work out a plan for the transfer of power. Attlee had deliberately set a short timespan for arrangements to be made. He feared that if more time were given, there would just be more disagreement.

Mountbatten soon realised the need for a speedy settlement. In March 1947, there were riots and killings between Muslims and Hindus in Punjab. Soon the trouble spread to other provinces. It seemed that civil war, with the inevitable thousands of deaths might be only months away. Mountbatten arrived in India in March 1947. His meetings with different political leaders convinced him that partition was inevitable. Few people wanted India partitioned, but Jinnah was adamant that the Muslims must have their own state.

The plan

On 3 June 1947, that plan was announced:

Two states should be set up, India and Pakistan. The interim constitution of both states was the 1935 Government of India Act.

Each state was to have Dominion status and have an Executive responsible to a Constituent Assembly.

Muslim majority provinces would vote either to stay in India or join Pakistan.

In Sindh and Balochistan, the provincial legislatures voted to join Pakistan. Bengal and Punjab had two decisions to make. Firstly on whether to join Pakistan. If so, they then had to decide whether the provinces should be partitioned into Muslim and non-Muslim areas. Both decided that they should join Pakistan, but that their Muslim-minority areas should stay in India. The NWFP also joined Pakistan after holding a referendum. The Muslim-majority district of Sylhet in Assam joined the eastern wing of Pakistan.

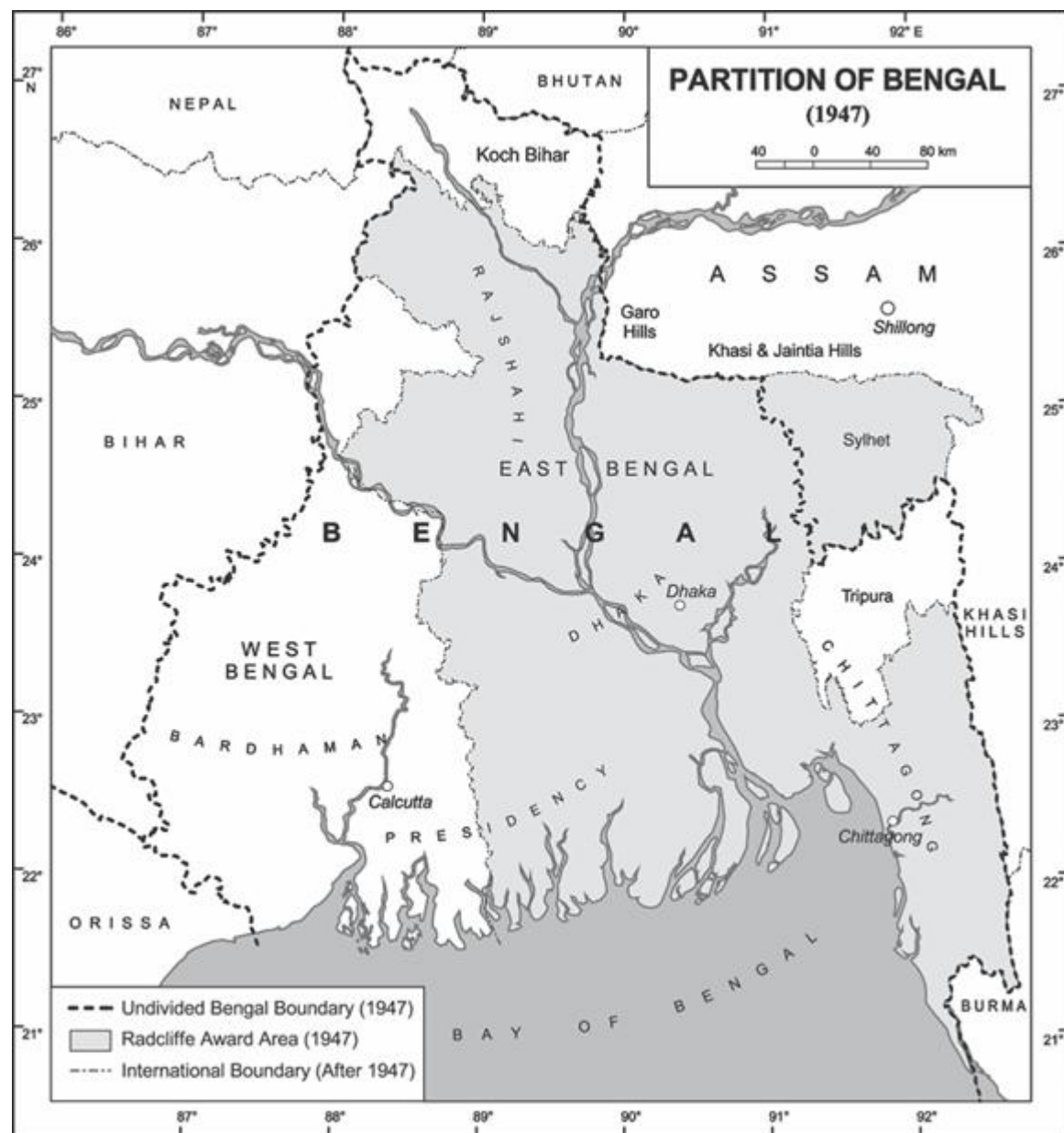
Discussion/Reflection Question

Who do you think would be most pleased with the 3 June Plan, Jinnah or Nehru?
Explain your answer.

Independence and two separate states

Mountbatten said that the final transfer of power would be on 15 August 1947, even though there was still a need to draw boundaries between Muslim and non-Muslim areas, particularly in Bengal and Punjab, and resolve issues such as the division of assets. On 15 July 1947, the **Indian Independence Act** was passed. British India was partitioned into India and Pakistan, two dominion states. A new country had been born.

The Partition of Bengal



Source: Banglapedia, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh

Why was Bengal partitioned?

Within 36 years from the annulment of the first partition of Bengal in 1911, the province again came to be divided in 1947 into two halves along the same geographical lines, mainly on communal consideration.

Jinnah's demand for the partition of India led to the second partition of Bengal. The Hindu-majority West Bengal became a part of the Indian Union, with the Muslim-majority East Bengal a part of Pakistan.

The Hindus by and large opposed the 1905 partition and most Muslims rendered their support to it; but it was the Hindus, especially the Hindu Mahasabha, who proposed the partition of Bengal in 1947 and Muslim leadership which was reluctant to accept it. **HS Suhrawardy**, chief minister of Bengal, made a last-moment attempt to keep Bengal united with the status of an independent state. However, his move for a United Independent Bengal was unsuccessful.



HS Suhrawardy (source: Banglapedia, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh)

The Hindus had become a political minority under Muslim-dominated coalition rule in Bengal in the years between 1937 and 1947. The resultant Hindu fear of Muslim domination in undivided Bengal outside the Indian Union and the Indian Muslim fear of perpetual Hindu domination over them in a united India helps explain why Bengal was eventually partitioned.

How it happened

The British proposals for partition, known as the 3 June plan, laid down elaborate procedures for partition and transfer of power. These included, among other things:

- a. holding of notional system of voting by the members of the Hindu-majority and Muslim-majority areas of the Bengal Legislative Assembly sitting separately (similar procedure to be followed in the case of the Punjab).

- b. referendum in the Surma Valley of Assam ie, the Sylhet district in the North-East and the North West Frontier Province in the North-West to determine their future.
- c. a Boundary Commission to demarcate the adjoining areas between the proposed states.

As per the plan, on 20 June the issue of Bengal partition was decided upon by the members of the Assembly. Several rounds of voting were held. On the question of joining the Indian Union, the vote of the joint session of the House was 126 votes against the move and 90 votes in favour.

Then the members of the Muslim-majority areas (East Bengal) in a separate session passed a motion by 106-35 votes against partitioning Bengal and for joining the new Pakistan as a whole.

This was followed by the separate meeting of the members of the non-Muslim-majority areas (West Bengal) who by a division of 58-21 voted for partition of the province.

In a referendum held on 7 July, the electorate of Sylhet by a majority of 55,578 votes (239,619 voted for joining East Bengal as against 184,041 for remaining in Assam) gave the verdict in favour of Pakistan.

Consequent upon this, the Boundary Commission headed by Sir Cyril Radcliffe made up the matter of territorial demarcation between the two newly created states.

Adapted from Banglapedia, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh

Consequences

The Partition of India radically changed the political map of the subcontinent. Behind the bare fact of creation of two new countries of Pakistan and India, there took place a huge displacement of people. Muslims tended to migrate to Pakistan and the Hindus to India. So a huge refugee problem hit both states.

The politics of tension and mistrust of the pre-independence period grew even more serious. At the same time, the two states seemed to have started two different journeys in the making of post-colonial history. In the next chapter, we will discuss the newly created Pakistan and subsequent emergence of independent Bangladesh.

Specimen exam questions

These are the types of questions which you could be asked about this period in the exam.

Can you answer them?

Part (a)

- . In which year was the East India Company formed? (1)
- . Who was defeated by Robert Clive at Palashi in 1757? (1)
- . Which movement was formed by Haji Shariatullah? (1)
- . Which new system of government in the provinces was introduced in the Montford reforms of 1919? (1)
- . Which British Viceroy was responsible for partitioning India in 1937? (1)

Part (b)

- . Write what you know about the events in the War of Independence in 1867. (5)
- . Why did the British win the War of Independence of 1867? (5)

Part (c)

Which of the following was the most important in the creation of the new state of Pakistan?

Explain your answer by writing about all three alternatives. (10)

- . The Lahore Resolution
- . The Cripps Mission
- . The Cabinet Mission Plan

Bangladesh Studies O Level (7094) Pilot Textbook

Topic 5 (a) Problems facing the new nation of Pakistan

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Purpose of this chapter

This chapter covers Topic 5 of the five History & Culture Topics in the syllabus for the Cambridge GCE Ordinary Level Bangladesh Studies (syllabus 7094). It introduces candidates to the:

- problems facing the new nation of Pakistan (**Topic 5a**)
- problems of national integration between East and West Pakistan (**Topic 5b**)
- political mobilisation and events leading to Bangladesh independence (**Topic 5c**).

It explains how in 1947 Pakistan faced many problems and that some of them were so deep-rooted that the unity of the country could not be maintained. One of the issues which first united the people of East Pakistan in opposition to the discrimination they faced from West Pakistan was whether Bangla should be adopted as a state language. However, economic, political and social discrimination also played its part. As discontent grew in East Pakistan, the central government took increasingly repressive actions. Following a mass uprising in 1969 and the failure of the central government to accept that the Awami League had won the 1970 election, a Liberation War broke out – leading to an independent Bangladesh.

Topic 5a: Problems facing the new nation of Pakistan

Summary

On 14 August 1947, Pakistan became an independent country. But it faced many problems. Not only did it have to find a way to set up a new government in a country with limited resources, but it had to do so in the face of some of the most serious communal violence ever seen. Even more significant was that Pakistan was not really one country, but two – West Pakistan and East Bengal (later renamed East Pakistan).

1947 14 August: partition of British India, sovereign states of Pakistan and India established
1947 27 October: undeclared war with India
1948 21 March: birth of regional movement

1948 April: canal water dispute
1948 11 September: death of Jinnah, Nazimuddin becomes Governor General

Timeline showing the problems facing the new nation of Pakistan



Muhammed Ali Jinnah (source: Banglapedia, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh)

On 14 August 1947, Muhammed Ali Jinnah was sworn in as Governor-General of Pakistan. He declared that 'Pakistan has come to exist forever', but it faced many problems before it could feel secure. The leaders of India had accepted partition in the expectation that it would not be permanent. As one historian has since stated:

'Most of the leaders of the Indian National Congress thought that Pakistan was not a viable state – politically, economically, geographically or militarily – and that sooner or later India would re-unite.'

The euphoria of independence was short-lived as partition brought disastrous consequences in the wake of communal conflict. Partition unleashed untold misery and loss of lives and property as millions of Hindu and Muslim refugees fled either Pakistan or India. Both nations were also caught up in a number of conflicts involving the allocation of assets, demarcation of boundaries, equitable sharing of water resources and control over Kashmir.

1. Geographical problems

In 1947, Pakistan finally gained its long-fought-for independence, but it immediately faced very serious problems. Although Pakistan was created to unite the Muslim population of the old British India, it did not have natural borders, such as rivers, mountains or the sea. The two

separate parts of Pakistan (East Bengal and West Pakistan) were separated by about a thousand miles of land that belonged to India. The vast distance between them also meant that there were significant differences and outlook between the people of the two different regions. East Bengal and the Punjab, for example, were both largely Muslim areas, but they had little else in common.

2. Refugees and inter-communal violence

In the years immediately before partition, there was widespread violence between the Muslim and non-Muslim communities across India. Although Congress and the Muslim League called for calm, the summer of 1947 saw rioting which led to numerous deaths. When the boundary of the two nations was demarcated and announced in August 1947, things became even worse. Millions of people found themselves living in the 'wrong' country and became victims of communal attacks. The only answer was for Muslims to move into Pakistan and non-Muslims to move into India. So began one of the largest migrations ever witnessed in the history of mankind – and also some of the worst scenes of communal violence.

Immediately after independence, Pakistan had to deal with a massive refugee problem: while 5.3 million Hindus fled from Punjab and Sindh into India, 5.9 million Muslims fled from India into West Pakistan. Also, 3.3 million Hindus fled East Bengal, and 1.3 million Muslims fled from India into East Bengal. Some moved willingly, taking as many of their possessions with them as they could. Others fled from violence and often arrived in their new country with nothing at all.

The violence was sometimes orchestrated by the local authorities, and many Muslim historians believe that Hindus and Sikhs had an organised programme for the massacre of Muslim refugees. In the non-Muslim princely states, there were examples of state troops being used to support attacks on Muslims. It is also true, however, that atrocities were carried out by Muslims as a tide of communal hatred swept across the subcontinent in late 1947.

Estimates for the death toll vary considerably, but it is likely that as many as a million men, women and children died as a result of the violence or the rigours of the long journey. As many as 20 million people were made homeless, and both India and Pakistan faced enormous problems as huge numbers of refugees fled to them for safety. Karachi received nearly two million refugees in 1947 alone. Not surprisingly, it was extremely difficult for these people to be accommodated. Pakistan, in particular, as a new and not wealthy country, did not have the necessary facilities to house millions of new citizens.

By the end of 1947, India and Pakistan were so concerned about the communal violence that they began to co-operate in trying to control it. This led to more orderly evacuation of refugees from one country to the other, but it did not completely end the violence.

Comprehension Questions

1. Describe the movement of people in 1947/8.
2. What problems did this huge migration cause?

Discussion/Reflection Question: Understanding historical events

1. Why did so many people leave their homelands in 1947/8?
2. Why was there so much violence at this time?

3. Political problems

In 1947, it had been decided that old British India should be divided into two new countries, Pakistan and India. But Pakistan was to face many more problems than India.

India inherited government buildings, furnishings, even officials from the British. Pakistan had none of these.

India had officials, members of the Indian National Congress, with the political experience to take over the government. These people had worked to gain political influence under the British and had experience both of the election process and of holding political office. In Pakistan, the assembly members were mostly wealthy landowners with little political experience. The Muslim League drew most of its support from rural areas and lacked support from urban areas.

The geographical separateness of East and West Pakistan made it hard to govern as one country. This was made worse by the fact that while over half the population of Pakistan lived in East Bengal, the majority of government and army leaders came from West Pakistan.

Pakistan lacked both the administrative and the governmental machinery to run the affairs of a new country. Even the minimal requirements of a working central government – skilled personnel, equipment and a capital city with government buildings – were missing.

The first task before the newly born state was to form a government, and a cabinet of experienced people, with **Muhammed Ali Jinnah** as Governor-General and **Liaquat Ali Khan** as Prime Minister, was formed. Arrangements were made to bring in former Indian officials who had opted for Pakistan. All government papers, files and documents which Pakistan got as her share were brought from Delhi, the capital of the undivided India, to Karachi, and also from Calcutta, the capital of Bengal, to Dhaka, the capital of East Bengal. It was no doubt a heavy burden on the part of a new state. There was not even proper office accommodation at the start. Some central and provincial departments were lodged in army barracks and others in private buildings. Under these conditions, the government of Pakistan began to function.

Comprehension Questions

1. What geographical problems did Pakistan face as a new country in 1947?
2. How was India better equipped for independence than Pakistan in 1947?

4. Economic problems

Pakistan was made up of states that were mostly underdeveloped, with very little industry. Although Karachi was a modern port with substantial trading and business activity, much of Pakistan (e.g. the North West Frontier Province) was on the borders of the sub-continent and had not been linked to the industrialisation that had taken place in central India. Around 90% of the people lived in the countryside, and there were only 8 towns with a population of more than 100,000 (Karachi, Lahore, Dhaka, Hyderabad, Rawalpindi, Multan, Sialkot and Peshawar).

Pakistan was not a wealthy country and its major activity, agriculture, did not produce a sufficient surplus to create the wealth needed for industrialisation. The exception to this was in the production of jute, where, in 1947, East Bengal produced nearly 70% of the world's crop. Jute export produced the major source of foreign exchange earnings for Pakistan for many years. But the problems created by partition are exemplified by the fact that, in 1947, Pakistan did not have a single jute mill. All the jute mills were in the new India, in spite of the fact that East Pakistan produced more than 90 per cent of jute.

As the table below shows, in the division of the sub-continent's assets, Pakistan did not do well.

The percentage of economic assets in Pakistan after partition

Registered factories	10%
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Industrial workers	6.5%
Electrical capacity	5%
Mineral deposits	10%

5. The division of financial and military assets

One of the major issues involved in partitioning the old British India was how to divide up the assets of the country. They now belonged to two countries, not one, and there had to be an agreement on how they should be shared. It was agreed that the assets were to be divided on the ratio of 17 to India and 5 to Pakistan. This reflected the relative size and populations of the two countries.

In June 1947, it was agreed that Pakistan would be paid 750 million rupees of the 4 billion rupees in the Reserve Bank. The first 200 million rupees were paid. Then war broke out over Kashmir. India refused to pay the rest, saying Pakistan would only use it to buy arms to fight against India. If Pakistan stopped fighting and agreed that Kashmir should be an Indian possession, then the rest would be paid. What the Indian government hoped was that by withholding the money, Pakistan would become bankrupt. It was only after Gandhi went on hunger strike that a further 500 million rupees was paid. 50 million rupees still remain unpaid.

Pakistan also needed armed forces and military equipment to ensure its security. The British were, at first, reluctant to divide the armed forces but eventually it was agreed that they should be split 36%: 44% between Pakistan and India. The armed forces personnel were given freedom to opt for whichever country they wanted. Muslim regiments went to Pakistan and non-Muslim to India. It was agreed to split the army along religious lines as in the table below.

	Pakistan	India
Armoured divisions	6	14
Artillery divisions	8	40
Infantry divisions	8	21

A big problem for the Pakistan army was that their army of 150,000 men needed 4,000 officers. There were only 2,500 trained Muslim officers, as the British Indian army had favoured Hindu officers. While it was possible to train some men up from ordinary soldiers, Jinnah was forced to take 500 British officers temporarily. These were mostly at the highest rank, for this was where there were no Muslim officers at all. But as Pakistan faced almost immediate war with India over Kashmir, it needed the best army it could raise, no matter who was leading it.

In other military matters, the Indians once again failed to keep to the agreement. They did not want to see Pakistan become strong militarily, especially as they were fighting in Kashmir. All 16 ordnance factories were in India, which refused to hand any over. Consequently, Pakistan had no factories capable of making military goods. India eventually agreed to pay 60 million rupees in lieu of handing over ordnance factories and this was used by the Pakistani government to build an ordnance factory at Wah.

The military supplies which India agreed to hand over sometimes did not arrive, or when they did, they were often old, worn, damaged and obsolete. The result of the division of military assets in 1947 was that Pakistan started its life with a seriously under-resourced military force.

6. The canal water dispute

The canal water dispute had its origins in the partition of Punjab in 1947. West Pakistan is a fertile country but has a hot and dry climate. Rainfall is not plentiful and so it relies upon irrigation from a series of canals which draw water from the three main rivers in the area, the Indus, the Jhelum and the Chenab.

The partition of the subcontinent cut across many rivers and canals. The problem for Pakistan was that the flow of water through the canals and rivers was controlled at a series of 'headworks', all of which lay in the part of Punjab that was now in India. The Indian government promised not to interfere with the supply of water to Pakistan. However, India and Pakistan were soon in dispute over the canals, especially the waters from the Bari-Doab canal. India claimed that as the headworks were in its country it had complete rights to do what it wanted with the water. Pakistan argued that it had a right to the water as its economy depended upon it. The Pakistan government called for the matter to be settled by the International Court of Justice, but India refused.

In May 1948, a temporary agreement was reached. India agreed to allow water from east Punjab to flow into west Punjab, but only if Pakistan agreed to try to find alternative water supplies. The 'water problem' was one that the new country had to address urgently.

Comprehension Questions

1. What was the canal water dispute?
2. Why was it important that it was solved quickly?

7. Social problems

Pakistan was mainly made up of five different groups:

the Pakhtuns in the north

the Balochs in the west

the Sindhis in the south

the Punjabis in the north-east

the Bengalis in the east.

These people had different traditions, cultures, languages and lifestyles. The British system of government had given these diverse people very little opportunity to participate in government. In 1947, some of them, particularly the Balochs and the Bengalis, were sure they now wanted to transfer allegiance to a new 'Pakistan'.

Issue of national language

One of the issues which highlighted this national diversity was the status of the Bangla language. Bangla was the mother tongue of about 56 percent of the people of Pakistan. On the other hand, Urdu was the mother tongue of only 6 percent people of the whole of Pakistan. Bangla was naturally entitled to be the state language of East Pakistan, if not entire Pakistan. But the Pakistani ruling clique ignored this reality and planned to introduce Urdu as the state language of entire Pakistan.

In March, 1948 Jinnah came on a tour to Dhaka. He addressed the people of East Bengal at a public meeting and in the course of his speech declared "Urdu and only Urdu shall be the State Language of Pakistan." It was bitterly opposed by the Bengali Muslims, especially the student community. They demanded that both Urdu and Bangla should be the State Languages of Pakistan on the ground that the majority of the people of Pakistan lived in East Bengal and spoke Bangla. Despite being the majority in Pakistan, they did not demand that Bangla alone should be the state language of Pakistan.

The undemocratic comments of Jinnah offended them greatly and it gave birth to a strong regional movement for greater autonomy. As you will read in Section B, Jinnah did not realise that he unconsciously sowed the seed of dissension in Pakistan and paved the way for her future disintegration.

Discussion/Reflection Question: Understanding local feeling

Why were the people of East Bengal so angry when Jinnah rejected Bangla as the national language of Pakistan?

Other social issues

East Bengal inherited a number of social issues from the colonial period. One of the issues affecting the general well-being of the people was poverty. In the course of the colonial period, many peasants became landless. Most of the three million people who died during the great famine of Bengal of 1943 were from the landless population. The new state of Pakistan had to tackle the question of landlessness and agrarian poverty in general.

Another problem was that of public health. In the last few decades of colonial period, cholera, malaria and a number of other water-borne diseases affected a large section of the people of the region. Though immediate pressing issues of communalism and refugees were high on the agenda, the problem of public health lurked behind and became evident soon after the emergence of East Pakistan.

In 1948, there were only 211 doctors and 2,825 hospital beds in East Bengal. During the colonial period, most educational institutions were established in Kolkata at the expense of East Bengal. When the new nation of Pakistan emerged, there were only a few district level secondary schools. In higher education, there was only one University, the University of Dhaka, and a few colleges and madrasahs. In terms of producing skilled manpower, the lack of opportunities for mass education appeared to be another important social issue before the new state.

8. The Kashmir issue

The most serious disagreement between India and Pakistan concerned the state of Jammu and Kashmir. This was the largest state in the subcontinent and the fact that it had boundaries with Tibet, China, Afghanistan and Russia gave it great strategic importance.

In 1947, most of the 4 million inhabitants of Kashmir were Muslim, but the maharaja was a Hindu. It was believed that he was trying to win independence for his state and so he delayed joining either Pakistan or India.

The maharaja, **Hari Singh**, did not treat the Muslim population well. In September 1947, he started a campaign to drive many Muslims out of Kashmir. Over 200,000 fled to Pakistan and finally the Muslims rose in rebellion. The maharaja was forced to turn to India for help to crush the Muslims. Indian help came only after the maharaja agreed to accede to India.

Pakistan could not accept this, so sent troops to help the Muslims in Kashmir. The Pakistan government was convinced that the Indians had always planned to seize Kashmir. Neither side was strong enough for a long war and in January 1948 the matter was referred to the UNO. A ceasefire was arranged and Kashmir was divided between India and Pakistan. However, Pakistan was angered that India retained the largest area of Kashmir, including the capital, Srinagar. After pressure from Lord Mountbatten, the Indian Prime Minister, Nehru, agreed that a referendum would be held in Kashmir to determine the wishes of the people, 'once the situation has normalised'.

This referendum has not been held and the 'Kashmir' issue remains a major source of discontent between the two countries today. Pakistan has made numerous demands that the UNO resolves the dispute, but, so far, it has been impossible to reach agreement.

Sourcework

In 1951, a prominent member of the assembly said:

Pakistan is a unique country having two wings which are separated by more than one thousand miles. The two wings differ in all matters except two things: namely that they have a common religion, barring a section of the people in East Pakistan, and we have achieved independence by a common struggle. All other factors, the language, the tradition, the culture, the customs, the dietary habits, the calendar, the standard time – practically everything, is different.

1. What did he mean?
2. In view of what he was saying, do you think that Pakistan stood no chance of surviving as one nation? Explain your answer.

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Topic 5(b) Problems of national integration between East and West Pakistan

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Purpose of this section

This section covers the problems of national integration between East and West Pakistan. It introduces candidates to the:

- Language Movement
- emerging disparities between the two wings of Pakistan, in terms of economic development, defence and other sectors.

Summary

Between 1947 and 1956, the language issue created tension between the people of East and West Pakistan. But it was only one example of the many injustices which the people of East Pakistan had to suffer at the time.

1947 October: Formation of Rashtra Bhasha Sangram Parishad
1948 21 and 24 March: Announcements by Jinnah — Urdu alone should be the state language — leading to protests
1949 9 March: Formation of the Purbo Bangla Bhasha Committee
1952 21 February: Language Movement — protests and killings
1956 Bangla given the status of one of the state languages in the 1956 Constitution of Pakistan

Timeline showing the problems of national integration between the two wings of Pakistan.

The Language Movement

As you read in Section A, when the new nation of Pakistan came into being, the question of language became one of the most important national issues for the new government.

Bengalis believed that the West Pakistani leadership was showing **an irrational bias in favour of Urdu at the expense of Bangla**. This section looks in detail at how the people in East Pakistan became **politically active to resist attempts to establish Urdu as the national language**.

September 1947: conference supporting Bangla

Perhaps the first significant event in the Language Movement was in September 1947 when **youth workers in East Pakistan** held a conference in Dhaka with **Tasadduk Hossain** as

President. This conference passed a resolution calling for Bangla to be accepted as the language of the offices and the law courts and as the medium of instruction in East Pakistan. Shortly afterwards, a cultural organisation called **Tamuddin Majlish** called for Bangla to be made one of the state languages alongside Urdu. This call came in a booklet written by Professor Abul Kashem, who asked for all citizens of East Pakistan to join the Language Movement.

October 1947: an organised structure

In October 1947, Tamuddun Majlish formed a **Rashtrabhasha Sangram Parishad** to give the movement an organised structure. Nurul Haq Bhuyan was appointed convener of this Sangram Parishad and a number of meetings held, such as that at the Fazlul Haq Hall, which was addressed by the poet Jasimuddin, Mr Habibullah Bahar, Dr Qazi Motahar Hossain, Professor Abul Kashem and others.

December 1947: protest at Urdu being only state language

Despite these moves, in December 1947, the Education Conference held in Karachi sponsored by the government of Pakistan, decided to make only Urdu the state language of Pakistan. In protest, on 6 December, students held a meeting at the Dhaka University campus under the chairmanship of Professor Abul Kashem and followed this meeting with a procession. The students also met with some of the provincial ministers, including Syed Afzal, and obtained a promise of support for Bangla to be a state language.

January 1948: demands made

In January 1948, the Rashttra Bhasha Sangram Parishad made the following demands relating to the question of language:

1. Bangla should be the medium of instruction and language of the offices and law courts of East Bengal (East Pakistan)
2. There should be two state languages of Pakistan - Bangla and Urdu.

February 1948: protests at use of Urdu and English only

Another important step came in February 1948. The first Constituent Assembly of Pakistan started to record its proceedings in Urdu side by side with English. Dharendra Nath Dutta of Comilla, a member of the Constituent Assembly from East Pakistan, protested about this and demanded that Bangla should be seen as one of the official languages and the proceedings recorded in that language. The demand was rejected by the Constituent Assembly and, in protest, students, teachers and intelligentsia of East Pakistan called a general strike in Dhaka on 26 February.

March 1948: strikes

A few days later, on 2 March 1948, supporters of the Bangla language met at the Fazlul Haq Hall of Dhaka University. They agreed to form an **all-party Rashtrabhasha Sangram Parishad**. The Sangram Parishad called a general meeting on 11 March 1948, to show its opposition to the government's decision **to impose Urdu as the official language**. The police took firm measures. Many of the protestors were arrested or injured at this meeting. In protest, a further strike was organised for 13 March. This strike was extended up to 15 March. A general strike was also observed in all districts of the country.

Such was the discontent that **Chief Minister Khwaja Nazimuddin was forced to meet the Sangram Parishad on 15 March**. He agreed to free the arrested students, investigate police excesses, table a Bill in the Assembly for making Bangla a state language and to lift restrictions imposed on newspapers.

March 1948: inflammatory speech by Jinnah

But the difficulties involved in changing the government's mind were clearly seen in March 1948 when Jinnah visited Dhaka. **On 21 March, he addressed a public meeting at the then Race Course Ground and declared:**

"Urdu, and only Urdu, shall be the state language of Pakistan."

One week later, he repeated this statement at Dhaka University Convocation on 24 March at the Curzon Hall. The students present protested strongly and on the same day the **Rashtrabhasha Parishad submitted a memorandum to Jinnah demanding that Bangla be made a state language of Pakistan**.

1949 to 1952: Pakistan Prime Ministers ignore demands

The pressure was kept up despite government opposition. Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan visited Dhaka towards the end of 1949. The students of Dhaka University again called for Bangla to be given official status. But **Liaquat Ali Khan ignored their demands and did not make any comment on this subject**. He showed his true feelings in September 1950, when he declared in the Constituent Assembly that Urdu would be the only state language of Pakistan.

Khwaja Nazimuddin succeeded Liaquat Ali Khan as a Prime Minister of Pakistan on 26 January, 1952. But he, too, did not support raising the status of Bangla. At a public meeting in Dhaka, he reiterated that Urdu would be the only state language of Pakistan.

21 February 1952: State Language Day

Once again, as a mark of protest, a call for hartal throughout the province was given and an **All Party Rashtrabhasha Sangram Committee** was formed under the presidency of Aatur Rahman Khan, with Qazi Gholam Mahboob as convener. This Sangram Committee resolved to carry on the movement until the demand for Bangla as a state language was accepted by the government. It called a further students' strike on 4 February and decided to observe 21 February as the State Language Day on which there would be a country-wide hartal.

On 20 February, the Government of Nurul Amin tried to stop the protests by banning processions and meetings. But on 21 February, students of Dhaka University defied the order and marched from Dhaka University campus to the Provincial Assembly which was in session, chanting the slogan, "Rashtrabhasha Bangla Chai." The police used tear gas to disperse the students who had assembled in the campus of the present-day Medical College and violence broke out. The police opened fire, killing a number of people including Jabbar, Rafiq, Barkat and Salam. Many others were injured in the firing.

News of the violence spread quickly over Dhaka and reaction was quick. Two days later, on 22 February, a protest rally was held at which large numbers of protesters were present. Once again, the police opened fire and Shafiur Rahman was killed. On the same day, in a meeting of the students held at the Medical College hostel, it was decided to build a Shaheed Minar in memory of those who had died. A 12 feet high Shaheed Minar was erected by students in front of Dhaka Medical College. The next day, the police tore it down. But another Shaheed Minar was built on the same site, which is the present Central Shaheed Minar.



Shaheed Minar (source: Banglapedia, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh)

1956 constitution: Bangla made a state language

Finally, the government of Nurul Amin passed a resolution in the Provincial Assembly that the proposal to make Bangla a state language should be raised at the Constituent Assembly. In the face of continuous students', and people's, movements, the Pakistan Government was compelled to give Bangla the status of one of the state languages in the 1956 Constitution of Pakistan.

21 February – international importance

21 February is now observed as Language Day. In honour of the martyrs who gave their lives, the Central Shahid Minar has been constructed in front of the Dhaka Medical College. As proclaimed at UNESCO's general conference in November 1999, 21 February has been recognised as International Mother Language Day. Since February 2000, it is being observed worldwide as International Mother Language Day to promote linguistic and cultural unity.

The Language Movement was the first organised expression of the mass consciousness of the people of Bangladesh, who felt that their views were not being listened to. The protest was to be an important stepping stone in inspiring the opposition to discrimination and bringing about independence.

Comprehension Questions

1. Make a list of the important events in the fight to have Bangla accepted as an official language.
2. Why were the leaders of Pakistan generally opposed to Bangla becoming an official language?
3. Why do you think the methods adopted were finally successful?

Emerging disparities between the two wings of Pakistan

Introduction

In chapter 4, we read about the Lahore Resolution of 1940, when Sher-e-Bangla A. K. Fazlul Haq had explained the need for different autonomous political units in India for the Muslim majority areas. He based his belief on the geographical incongruity, the economic problems and the linguistic and cultural differences among the people of different regions. But in course of time, the Muslim leaders felt that politically isolated Muslim majority territories would be weak and insecure vis-à-vis India. Therefore, the original idea of autonomous statehood (as mentioned in the original draft of the Lahore Resolution) was replaced by an idea of a single "State". The revised proposal was moved by Hossain Shahid Suhrawardy, seconded by Chowdhury Khalikuzzaman and supported by Malik Firouz Khan Noon and others.

The subsequent history of Pakistan proved that the merger of two widely different regions could not exist for long. East Bengal or East Pakistan and West Pakistan were separated by about one thousand miles by the Indian territory. No unity could be developed between the distinctive languages, culture tradition and livelihood of the people of these two parts of Pakistan. As time went by, alongside the geographical, social and cultural differences, there also developed gradual disparity between the two wings in economic and other institutional levels such as military, educational and political representations.

Disparity in economic development

The provincial government in the east did not have any control over its own economy as everything was controlled by the centre. Trading bodies and foreign missions were established in West Pakistan. A greater proportion of foreign aid and the national development budget was allocated for the west wing. Whereas between 1947-48 and 1960-61, capital investment for development purposes amounted to 172 crore Rupees for East Pakistan, it was 430 crore Rupees for West Pakistan. At the same time, the earning of East Pakistan from foreign trade, of jute for instance, was diverted to West Pakistan.

As a result, the economic gap which existed between the two wings in 1947-48 increased substantially over the years. Per capita income increased in West Pakistan from Rs.330 in 1949-50 to Rs.373 in 1959-60; whereas in East Pakistan it declined from Rs. 305 to Rs. 288.

After coming to power in 1958, Ayub Khan promised to address the disparity that existed between the two wings. At first there were some improvements. In East Pakistan in 1948-49, private investment had been worth 547 million rupees, in 1963-64 it had almost doubled to 1038 million rupees. But still it was only 22% of the total investment in entire Pakistan. At the same time, the per capita income of West Pakistan rose to 464 rupees in 1963-64, while in East Pakistan it rose to only Rs. 327.

Disparities in defence

The people of East Pakistan were not represented proportionately in important posts like the defence and civil services according to the population ratio. While the security of East Pakistan was uncertain and the province was also subjected to discrimination in military matters, the headquarters of the three Defence services, i.e. Army, Navy and Air Force, were established in West Pakistan. Ordnance factories were also established in West Pakistan. Of the total Commissioned Officers in the Army and Air Force, only 5% and 17% respectively were from East Pakistan. Similar was the case in the Navy in which the percentage of superior officers ranged from 5 to 17%.

Administrative and political disparity

Pakistan had a severe shortage of trained administrative personnel, as most members of the pre-independent Indian Civil Service were Hindus or Sikhs who opted to belong to India at the time of partition. Rarer still were Muslims who had any past administrative experience. As a result, high-level posts in Dhaka, including that of Governor-General, were usually filled by West Pakistanis or by refugees from India who had adopted Pakistani citizenship. Although the representatives of East Bengal were in a majority in the first Constituent Assembly, both Governor-General and Prime Minister were appointed from West Pakistan. The capital of the new country was established in West Pakistan too.

Disparity in education

Disparity of the development of education between the two wings of Pakistan also gave rise to resentment. There was not an adequate number of educational institutions to meet the requirements of the large number of students. The development of scientific and professional education was also lacking. The students and professionals were deprived of the facilities of scholarships, training grants and other forms of aid.

During the period 1947-58, enrollment in primary schools increased by 163% in West Pakistan and by 38% in East Pakistan. Enrollment in secondary schools increased by 64% in West Pakistan, but dropped by 6.6% in East Pakistan. University enrollment increased by 38% in West Pakistan, but by only 11% in East Pakistan.

It was such lack of equality in various sectors of public life which was to provide the stimulus for the move towards independence.

Political debate

You are going to prepare for a political debate.

The motion to be debated is: *'Without the dispute over Bangla, Pakistan would have survived as a united country.'*

Choose whether you want to speak in favour of this motion or against it. You have been given 3 minutes to speak. Practise your speech to check that it is 3 minutes long!

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Topic 5(c) Political mobilisation and events leading to independence

■

Purpose of this section

This section covers the events leading to the independence of Bangladesh. It explains the:

- formation of the Awami League
- United Front
- Six Point Movement
- mass uprising of 1969
- 1970 election and its aftermath
- central government reaction to political mobilisation in East Pakistan
- freedom struggle and independence.

Summary

During the 1950s, political organisations developed in East Pakistan in response to discrimination from central government. Despite harsh measures from the government, demands for independence began to grow. Following the mass uprising of 1969 and the victory of the Awami League in the 1970 elections, troops were sent from West Pakistan to deprive Sheikh Mujibur Rahman of his rightful victory. This led to the Liberation War of 1971 and the establishment of Bangladesh as an independent country.

1949	23 June: formation of Awami Muslim League – 12 Point Programme
1952	Language Movement
1953	4 December: formation of Jukto Front – 21 Point Programme
1956	Framing of the First Constitution of Pakistan
1957	27 July: formation of National Awami Party
1958	27 October: Ayub Khan becomes President
1965	Second Indo-Pak War
1966	2 February: 6 Point Programme
1968	6 January: announcement of Agartala Conspiracy Case
1969	Mass Uprising; Ayub Resigns, Yahya assumes power

1970 General election
1971 26-28 March: East Pakistan attempts to secede; beginning of Civil War; Mujib arrested
1971 17 April: Formal Declaration of Independence of Bangladesh; Mujib named President
1971 3-4 December: Pakistan and India at war
1971 16 December: Pakistan Military Forces in East Pakistan surrender to Indian Armed Forces, marking Bangladeshi Independence

Timeline of important events

Formation of the Awami Muslim League: 1949

In June 1949, the **Awami Muslim League** was formed in Dhaka. It was formed partly to support the Language Movement but also in protest against the undemocratic and seemingly biased attitude of the Pakistan Government. **Moulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani** was the first President and **Shamsul Haq** was appointed the General Secretary of the Awami Muslim League. In 1955, this party dropped the word "Muslim" from its name and came to be known as the "Awami League". It adopted the path of secularism and non-communalism.



Bashanai (source: Banglapedia, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh)

Comprehension Questions

1. Why was the Awami League formed?
2. How did it change in 1955?

Formation of the United Front and its victory in the provincial election of 1954

Four opposition political parties of East Pakistan - the Awami League, Krishak Praja Party, Nezam-e-Islam and the Leftist Ganatantri Dal (Democratic Party) - formed the **Jukto Front (United Front)** on 4 December 1953 in order to jointly take part in the forthcoming provincial elections. Its election manifesto was formulated on the basis of its 21 point demands.

The United Front

The Front campaigned on an election manifesto that incorporated a Twenty One Point Programme adopted by the Front in November 1953. In addition to full regional autonomy, the manifesto demanded that the central government should delegate to the eastern province all subjects except defence, foreign affairs and currency. It also called for:

recognition of Bangla as a state language;

release of political prisoners;

transformation of the then official residence (Burdwan House) of East Bengal's chief minister into Bangla Academy;

construction of Shaheed Minar at the site of the police firing in 1952;

declaration of 21 February as a public holiday;

more autonomy for Dhaka and Rajshahi universities;

introduction of economic and social rights for industrial workers in keeping with the principles of ILO;

nationalisation of jute production;

guarantee of fair prices for commodities and

public support for cooperatives and cottage industries.

Source: Banglapedia, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh

In the election, held in **March 1954**, the ruling Muslim League was comprehensively defeated by the Jukto-Front, which was led by **Sher-e-Bangla A. K. Fazlul Huq, Maulana Bhashani and Hossain Shaheed Suhrawardy**. The United Front won **223 seats** out of **309** Muslim seats in the Assembly, whereas the ruling Muslim League managed to capture only **9** seats. After the election, **Chowdhury Khaliquzzaman**, the Governor of East Bengal invited **A. K. Fazlul Huq** to form the government on 3 April. The new government was formed with **Fazlul Huq** as Chief Minister on 15 May.

However, the cabinet lasted for only a few weeks, and on 29 May 1954, it was dismissed by the Central Government. The reason was that a riot in Adamjee Jute Mills and Chandragona Paper Mills showed that the government could not maintain law and order. The Defence Secretary, Iskander Mirza, was sent over to rule as Governor of the Province by the Central Government. A new cabinet was formed and the province was brought under the rule of the central government. In the new government, Fazlul Huq, however, was appointed the central Home Minister, and on 5 March 1956 he was made the Governor of East Pakistan. Although the United Front had won a landslide victory in the elections, it was now virtually redundant.

Comprehension Questions

1. Who won the 1954 elections?
2. Why did they stay in power for such a short time?

Political development from 1956 to 1966

Between the fall of the United Front government in 1954 and the introduction of Martial Law in 1958, various parties, including the Awami League, formed short-lived governments.

On 12 September 1956, the **Awami League Republican Coalition Ministry** was formed, headed by Shaheed Suhrawardy. This Ministry undertook measures for developing East Pakistan, which included the establishment of a permanent office of the Controller of Import and Export in East Pakistan. The government established the DIT for the development of Dhaka city, the CDA for the development of Chittagong city, the Inland Water Transport Authority, the Jute Marketing Corporation and the Film Development Corporation.

However, Maulana Bhasani differed with Suhrawardy on the question of foreign policy. As a result, Maulana Bhasani left the party and formed the **National Awami Party** on 27 July 1957. Finally, on 10 October 1957, Iskander Mirza brought an end to the Suhrawardy Ministry.

On 18 October 1957, the **Muslim League Republican Ministry** was formed under the leadership of Ishmail Ibrahim Chundrigar. After a few days, Firouz Khan Noon of the Republican Party became the Prime Minister. He declared that on the basis of the 1956 Constitution, the first general election of Pakistan would be held on 16 February 1959.

Meanwhile, both at the Centre and in the Provinces, the politicians were mostly preoccupied with self-interest. It was a period of intrigues and uncertainties. In East Pakistan, a political crisis occurred on 31 March 1958 when **Ataur Rahman Khan's** Ministry was dismissed by

the then **Governor A.K. Fazul Haq**. Later that night President Iskander Mirza removed the Governor from his office.

On the dismissal of Aatur Rahman Khan's Ministry, **Abu Hossain Sarkar** again became Chief Minister of the Province. He was soon dismissed and Aatur Rahman Khan again became the Prime Minister of East Pakistan and held this office for two months. In August 1958, Aatur Rahman Khan was appointed for the third time after the temporary stay of the Abu Hossain Ministry and he held the office till Martial Law was promulgated in the country.

Meanwhile, in 1956, the **first constitution of Pakistan** was framed. On the basis of this constitution, Pakistan assumed the name of the **Islamic Republic of Pakistan**. The provinces of the Western region was grouped under **one unit** and called "**West Pakistan**"; and East Bengal was renamed "**East Pakistan**". At this time, **Ghulam Mohammed** resigned, and on **23 March 1956**, **Iskander Mirza** became the first President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

Introduction of martial law

On 23 September 1958, an unfortunate incident occurred in the Provincial Assembly of East Pakistan. A **serious altercation and scuffle took place inside the Assembly in which the Deputy Speaker Shahed Ali was severely injured and later died**. This incident is regarded as a severe blow for the democratic rule in Pakistan.

Chaos in the Provincial Assembly of East Pakistan and the death of the Deputy Speaker provided the Pakistani ruling clique an excuse for political interference in this region. **After this incident, on 7 October, 1958, President Iskander Mirza introduced martial law by a declaration. He suspended the Constitution, Legislative Assembly, Central and Provincial Ministries. He also prohibited all political activities by banning all political parties.**

Commander-in-Chief General Mohammed Ayub Khan was appointed Chief Martial Law Administrator and Pakistan was divided into a number of military zones. **Major General Umrao Khan** was appointed Martial Law Administrator of East Pakistan. This was how military rule began in Pakistan.

Basic democracy

On 27 October 1958, General Ayub Khan removed Iskander Mirza and he himself assumed supreme power as the President of Pakistan. Ayub Khan remained Commander-in-Chief and the Chief Martial Law Administrator, thus becoming immensely powerful. Ayub Khan took certain political steps as soon as he assumed power:

An Elective Bodies Disqualification Ordinance (EBDO) was introduced and many politicians were 'ebdoed' for misuse of power.

In different stages of the administration screening committees were set up with a view to removing corrupt and inefficient officials from Government services. These committees finished their task in March, 1959. Most of the corrupt and inefficient Government officers were moved from their posts and the rest of them were made to retire.

One of the controversial measures of the Ayub Government was the introduction of Basic Democracy. It was considered virtually a dictatorship under the guise of democracy. He issued the Basic Democracies Order in October, 1959. It introduced a five-tier structure of representative bodies, but in 1962 the Provincial Development Advisory Council was abolished leaving four tiers:

Union Council

Thana Council

District Council

Divisional Council.

The first elections of the Basic Democrats were held in January 1960. Forty thousand Basic Democrats in each province were elected and they were given some training before entering their duties. Basic Democrats were basically members of Union Councils who were given the right to elect members of Provincial and National Assemblies and the President. A Referendum was held in 1960, in which these Basic Democrats made Ayub Khan the first elected President of Pakistan by means of a confidence-vote.

Martial law lifted

In 1962 President Ayub Khan lifted martial law and introduced a new constitution. In the same year, **Abdul Monem Khan**, a Central Minister of Health, was made the Governor of East Pakistan. During his governorship there were many problems in East Pakistan, though some developmental measures were taken, including the building of:

Parliament Building

Dhaka (later Zia) International Airport

Sadarghat Launch Terminal

Kamalapur Railway Station

Rampura TV Centre

New High Court Building (now the Supreme Court of Bangladesh)

Ashuganj Power Station

Bangladesh Agriculture University

Institute of Post Graduate Medicine and Research (IPGMR - now the Bangabondhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Hospital)

Atomic Energy Centre, Science Laboratory

Chittagong University

Jahangirnagar University

Several Medical and Engineering Colleges as well as Polytechnic and Vocational Institutes were also established.

In 1964, Presidential elections and elections to the Basic Democracies were held.

Mohammed Ayub Khan contested the presidential election and in January 1965 won the election against **Ms. Fatima Jinnah**, daughter of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the candidate of the combined opposition parties.

corr: fatema Jinnah is the sister of Muhammas ali Jinnah

Abdul Monem Khan, as the Governor of East Pakistan, remained steadfastly loyal to Ayub regime and this made him extremely unpopular. When Ayub Khan was forced to resign in 1969, Monem Khan's rule also came to an end.

Comprehension Questions

1. Why was Martial Law introduced in Pakistan in 1955?
2. Why did it come to an end in 1962?

The Six Points Movement: 1966

Despite the many development efforts during the Ayub regime, the essential disparity between the two wings of Pakistan were not properly addressed. As a result, the feeling of discrimination continued to grow among the people of East Pakistan. The Six Points

Movement, an anti-Ayub political movement gathered momentum and was a popular reflection of this discontent.

After the death of H. S. Suhrawardy in 1963, the leadership of the Awami League was taken over by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Under his leadership, the Awami League soon became one of the most popular and strongest political parties in East Pakistan.



Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (source: Banglapedia, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh)

On 5 February 1966, at the Lahore conference, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman announced his six-point political and economic programme for East Pakistan provincial autonomy. The Six Points Programme, in brief, is as follows:

1. A truer **federal type of constitution** should be framed for Pakistan on the basis of the Lahore Resolution. The constitution will be Parliamentary, with elections held on the basis of universal adult franchise.
2. Central Government shall only deal **with Defence and Foreign Affairs**; all other power will rest with the provinces.
3. There will be two separate **freely convertible currencies** in the two regions of the country; or one single currency for the whole country with the provision of two reserve banks in two provinces under a Federal Reserve banks.
4. **Control of taxation and revenue collection** shall have to be invested in the federal units. The Federal Government would receive a share from the collection of the collection of the federal units to meet financial obligations.
5. There should be **separate accounts for the foreign exchange** of the two regions. If necessary, the requirement of the Centre will be met by the two regions on the basis of equal rate or as specified in the constitution.

6. The federal states should have the authority to form regional armed forces or militia or para militia forces to protect the territories.

The people of East Pakistan welcomed the Six Points Programme and it gained widespread support for a variety of reasons:

It threatened the political and economic monopoly of West Pakistan.

East Pakistan's export earnings would no longer be manipulated for industrialisation of West Pakistan.

Foreign assistance would no longer be monopolised for West Pakistan only.

East Pakistan would no longer remain a captive market for West Pakistani products.

East Pakistan would no longer be exploited for maintaining the vast war machine of West Pakistan.

Economic priorities would no longer be determined for the advantage of West Pakistan.

It would end the dominance of West Pakistani bureaucrats.

It became more popular following the "Agartala Conspiracy Case" (see below).

Discussion/Reflection Question: Explaining history

In February 1966, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman announced his six-point political and economic programme. Take each point individually and explain why it was popular with the people of East Pakistan.

The Agartala Conspiracy Case 1968

Ayub interpreted Sheikh Mujib's demands as tantamount to a call for independence. After Sheikh Mujib's supporters voted for a general strike in Dhaka, the government arrested Mujib in January 1968, along with other civil and military officials. They were accused of conspiring at Agartala in India to separate East Pakistan from Pakistan through an armed revolution with India's help.

A special tribunal was constituted to try the case. But before the case could be heard, the people of East Pakistan rose in a mass uprising against Ayub Khan. The movement was led by the All Party Student Action Committee and such was the strength of opposition that the government was forced to back down and withdraw the case.

Research Task

The Agartala Case is a fascinating event in Bangladesh's history. Find out as much as you can about it and explain why it is so important.

The mass uprising of 1969

As the Pakistan Government and the leaders of West Pakistan did not accept Sheikh Mujib's Six Point Programme, the attempt to remove the differences between the two wings was foiled. The government tried to bring the situation under control by massive repression. The students of East Pakistan were united against this repressive policy. They formed an All-Party Struggle council, that later came to be known as the **Student's Action Committee (SAC)**. They started movements based on an Eleven-Points Plan which called, among other things, regional autonomy, freedom of speech and the nationalisation of big mills and factories including banks and insurances companies.

Mass discontent with Ayub Khan's rule increased. Maulana Bhashani, meanwhile, was the first to lend his support to the 11 point demand of the students. He took recourse to the "Gherao" movement to realise the demands of the various interests, particularly workers and peasants. His call for a "Demand Day" on December 17 1968 was a tremendous success. In January 1969, there were numerous clashes between police and students. During these clashes, **Assaduzzaman**, a student of the Law Department of the Dhaka University, was killed. The police shot dead 6 students from Nabakumar School. This led to a broader anti-government movement, and violent mob agitation gradually spread throughout East and West Pakistan.

Meanwhile, two incidents added fuel to the fire. These were the unfortunate deaths of **Sergeant Zahirul Haq**, an accused of the Agartala Case on 15 February 1969, and of **Dr. Shamsuzzoha**, a teacher at Rajshahi University, following a shooting incident on 17 February 1969. Rioting became so intense that a curfew was imposed in Dhaka.

With almost all sections of society - students, labourers, peasants, educationists, thinkers and artists - opposing his rule, Ayub Khan was forced to make concessions:

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was released on 22 February

On the same day the Agartala Conspiracy Case was dropped.

On 10th March 1969 Ayub Khan invited all political leaders to a round table conference at Rawalpindi to discuss the constitutional and political problems.

At the round table conference, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman demanded autonomy for East Pakistan, as set out in his 6 points (and the 11 points of the Students' Action Committee). Ayub Khan would not accept this demand and the talks ended in failure.

After the failure of the talks, the situation in East Pakistan deteriorated to such an extent that law and order began to break down. Production dropped to dangerously low levels and the economy began to suffer. On 25 March 1969, Ayub Khan was forced to resign and hand over power to **General Agha Mohammed Yahya Khan**, Commander-in-chief of the Pakistan Army.

Comprehension Questions

1. What concessions did President Ayub Khan make in February/March 1969?
2. Why do you think he made them?

The 1970 general elections and its aftermath

With the appearance of General Yahya Khan on the political horizon of Pakistan in 1969, everyone heaved a sigh of relief with the expectation that "one man rule" would ultimately come to an end and democracy would be restored. Yahya was committed to bringing democracy to Pakistan based on 'one man, one vote'.

From January 1970, political activity began again as the various parties began campaigning to elect a National Assembly of 300 members. That assembly was to be given 120 days to draw up a new constitution. Three days after elections to the assembly, there would be provincial elections.

The elections were planned for October 1970, but had to be postponed because severe flooding in East Pakistan caused such chaos that voting was impossible. The elections were finally held in December 1970 and January 1971. They were the first ever held in Pakistan on

the principle of 'one man, one vote'. The results were such a shock that they created a constitutional crisis in Pakistan.

The elections gave the <B< b>, led by **Bhutto**, 88 of the 138 seats in West Pakistan. But for the first time, East Pakistan had been allowed to have a number of seats reflecting the fact that it had a greater population than West Pakistan. There were 169 seats in East Pakistan and the Awami League won 167 of them. It also secured 298 out of 310 seats in the East Pakistan Provincial Assembly.

Discussion/Reflection Question

Why is the 1970 election considered such an important step on the road towards an independent Bangladesh?

Reasons for the Awami League success

A major reason for the success of the Awami League was the sense of frustration felt by the Bengalis in East Pakistan towards their Muslim countrymen in West Pakistan. They also resented the fact that East Pakistan was under-represented in all aspects of Pakistan's administration, from the government itself to the judiciary and civil service. In the army too, the majority of officers were from West Pakistan.

The Bengali people also felt that their province suffered from lack of economic development. In 1951 the per capita income of East Pakistan was 85% of that of West Pakistan. By 1970 it was only 60%. The Bengalis believed that West Pakistan's economic growth had taken place as a result of transferring resources from East to West Pakistan. They argued that the single largest Pakistani export was jute, which was grown predominantly in East Pakistan. But the proceeds from the export of jute and jute products were not substantially allocated to the development of East Pakistan.

So when the election of December 1970 came, the Awami League was able to win support by proposing a programme which called for a fairer share of government spending and more power to the provinces.

Why did the victory of the Awami League cause a constitutional crisis?

There were two major problems created by the results of the election;

The Awami League had won so many seats that it now had a majority not only in East Pakistan, but in the National Assembly as a whole. That meant that it was in a position to

form the government on its own. In theory, the future Prime Minister and the entire cabinet could come from East Pakistan. Although the PPP had won an overwhelming victory in West Pakistan, it was quite possible for it to have no role in the government – unless the Awami League invited it to share power.

The second problem was that the Awami League had won the election on a programme limiting the power of central government over the provinces. The call for the provinces to have control of their foreign exchange earned from trade would greatly reduce the funds available to the central government in West Pakistan.

Consequently, there was no way that Yayha and the West Pakistani politicians were prepared to allow the Six Points to be put into action. Mujib believed that they were negotiable, but he had little chance to explain this, before steps were taken against him.

Central government reaction to the result

In January 1971, Yayha visited Mujib and even referred to him as 'the next President of Pakistan'. He hoped that by doing this he could persuading Mujib that he should not use the new Assembly to create a new constitution limiting the power of central government.

Following this, in February 1970, **Bhutto** announced that the PPP would not take up their seats in the National assembly unless Mujib talked with the other parties and reached an agreement about power-sharing beforehand. On 1 March 1971, just two days before it was due to meet, Yayha postponed the opening of the Assembly, without setting a new date.

The freedom struggle and independence

Non-cooperation movement

The people of East Pakistan considered that they had been betrayed by Yayha and immediately began a campaign of mass civil disobedience, including strikes, demonstrations and refusing to pay taxes. Hartal was observed on 2 March in Dhaka, and on 3 March throughout the country. The students of Dhaka University vowed to create "*Swadhin (Independent) Bangladesh*".

On 3 March, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman addressed a huge public rally at Paltan. He announced hartal programme every day until 6 March from 5 a.m. to 2 p.m. Law Courts, Government offices, factories, and means of communication were to stop. Yahya Khan was forced to announce that the National Assembly session would be held on 25 March. At the same time, **Lt. General Tikka Khan** was appointed Martial Law Administrator and Governor of East Pakistan.

On 7 March Sheikh Mujibur Rahman made his most famous speech at the Race Course (the present day Suhrawardy Uddyan). He called on those present to prepare for a Liberation War and announced an action Programme of non-violent non-cooperation which was to be followed throughout Bangladesh. He announced 35 rules for running the civil administration and effectively became the leader of East Bengal.

Central government reaction to political mobilisation in East Pakistan

On 15 March Yahya and Bhutto met Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in Dhaka for further talks to resolve the situation. As it became apparent that no agreement could be reached, Tikka Khan brought in reinforcements. On 25 March Yahya flew back to Islamabad and the next day Bhutto left Dhaka. That night Tikka's men moved on the Awami League. Mujib was arrested and hundreds of his supporters and colleagues were arrested or killed.

Pakistani forces surrounded Dhaka city with tanks and other military vehicles. Truck loads of army men spread out through the city streets for stamping out all civil resistance. At midnight, the Dhaka University halls of residences and staff quarters were attacked with tanks and armoured vehicles. A number of teachers, students and officials were killed. Many buildings including some newspaper offices were battered with mortar shells. Many people were burnt alive in the houses set on fire. Various parts of old Dhaka, including Hindu majority Mahallas such as Shankhari Patti and Tantibazar came under mortar shells. Hundreds of inmates were gunned down. It was estimated that more than 50,000 men, women and children were killed in Dhaka, Chittagong, Jessore, Mymensingh, Kushtia and other cities within the first three days of the genocide beginning from 25 March 1971. This was termed as Operation Searchlight.

Source: Banglapaedia, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh

The outbreak of civil war

Yahya had sent the army into East Pakistan to 'keep order' and the Awami League was banned. In the absence of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, **Major Ziaur Rahman** appeared at Kalurghat Swadhin Bangla Radio Station on 26 March and made a declaration of independence of Bangladesh on behalf of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.



Ziaur Rahman (source: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh)

The invading Pakistani army continued its attacks on Dhaka and other parts of Bangladesh. Dhaka city was almost destroyed through torching and bombing. To stop the spread of the news of the atrocities reaching the outside world, the army restricted the movements of foreign journalists and imposed strict censorship on their reports. But huge numbers of peasants, workers, students, young people, women, teachers, artists and intellectuals joined in fighting the Liberation War.

On 31 March, India declared its support for 'the people of Bengal' against West Pakistan. The Indian Army began to help and train the Bengali army, which called itself **Mukti Bahini**. As a result, relations between India and Pakistan deteriorated rapidly. The Indian High Commission in Dhaka was closed, as was the Pakistani High Commission in Calcutta.

Government in exile

On 17 April 1971, in the village of Vaidyanathtala in the Meherpur district, Bangladesh formed its first government, with Mujibnagar as the capital of the Provisional Government. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was elected President, but as he was in a Pakistani jail, **Vice President Syed Nazrul Islam** became Acting President. Other important members of the government were:

Prime Minister: **Tajuddin Ahmed**

Foreign Minister: **Khandakar Mushtaq Ahmed**

Finance Minister: **Captain (Retd.) Mansur Ali**

Home Minister: **A. H. M. Qamruzzaman**

Colonel Muhammed Ataul Ghani Osmani became Commander-in-Chief of the Mukti Bahini.

Professor Yusuf Ali, Awami League member of National Assembly, read out a statement declaring 26 March 1971 as Independence Day. Acting President Syed Nazrul Islam and Prime Minister Tajuddin Ahmed appealed to other countries to recognise Bangladesh's independence.

The War of liberation



source: Banglapedia, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh

The first task of the Provisional Government was to lead the people in the Liberation War. It formed a regular armed Battalion, consisting of the Bengali members of the then East Pakistan Regiment and Bengali soldiers and officers of the Pakistani Army. Another body of forces by the name of "Sector Troops" was formed with the members of Police, EPR and Army. Later on, three brigades were formed known as "K" Force, "S" Force and "Z" Force consisting of the members of the regular armed battalion. They were treated as regular force. They were known as "*Mukti Bahini*" and "*Mukti Fauj*". Students, youths, peasants, workers and people from other professions helped form a guerilla force of 'Freedom Fighter' which played a very important role in the Liberation War. There were a few collaborators, known as Rajakars, Al-Badr and Al-Shams, who aided the Pakistani army in their killing and oppression. But the vast majority of Bengalis found a way to support the Provisional Government, either by fighting or more indirect methods, such as providing information.

Response of the world to the cause of Bangladesh

The first country to support Bangladesh in the War of Liberation was India. Around ten million Bengalis were forced to seek refuge in India when Pakistani forces started their genocide campaign. The government of Indira Gandhi and the people of India extended support to all who took refuge in India.

The Soviet Union also supported Bangladesh and in August 1971 signed a Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Commerce with India. So the Indian government knew that if it went to war with Pakistan it could rely on Soviet support. The Soviet Union also used its veto in the United Nations to prevent opposition to the Liberation War. With Soviet support, came assistance from other Eastern European countries.

Unfortunately, the governments of some states, including the USA and China, did not support Bangladesh in the Liberation War, but the common people of many countries sympathised with the hardships of the people of Bangladesh and provided them with practical assistance.

Bhutan was the first country to recognise Bangladesh as an independent sovereign country, closely followed, on 6 December 1971, by India. By that time, a full-scale war had broken out between India and Pakistan. The Indian forces and the Mukti Bahini jointly formed combined forces and directed attacks within East Pakistan. At the same time, Indian air forces and the freedom fighters conducted air raids on important Pakistani installations. The Indian Navy also joined in this operation.

Due to the intensive attack of the combined forces, the Pakistani invading forces were compelled to surrender unconditionally. On 16 December, **Lt. General Niazi**, Commander of the occupation forces, surrendered at the Suhrawardy Uddyan to the combined forces along with 93 thousand soldiers and weapons.

The Liberation War had been won and a new country established – the sovereign and independent state of Bangladesh.

Showing pride in your nation

You have been asked to prepare a paper for a foreign visitor explaining how Bangladesh became independent and why it needed to be free from West Pakistan. Prepare your report by using as many of the following points as you can:

the cultural differences between West and East Pakistan

discrimination against East Pakistan

the language issue

the repressive measures of the central government

the 1970 election

the heroic actions of the people of Bangladesh in the Liberation War.

Specimen exam questions

These are the types of questions which you could be asked about this period in the exam.

Can you answer them?

Part (a)

Who was Pakistan's first Prime Minister? **(1)**

Which leader said in March 1948 "Urdu, and only Urdu shall be the state language of Pakistan" ? **(1)**

In which year did Bangla receive the status as an official state language? **(1)**

Who made a famous speech on 7 March calling for preparations for a Liberation War? **(1)**

Who declared Bangladesh's independence on Kalurghat Swadhin Bangla Radio Station on 26 March 1971? **(1)**

Which was the first country to recognise Bangladesh's independence? **(1)**

Part (b)

Write what you know about the movement of people between India and Pakistan in 1947/8. **(5)**

Why did the Pakistan government face economic problems in 1948? **(5)**

Part (c)

Which of the following was the most important reason for the desire in Bengal to form an independent country? Explain your answer by writing about all three alternatives **(10)**

- The language issue
- Economic discrimination
- The 1970 elections